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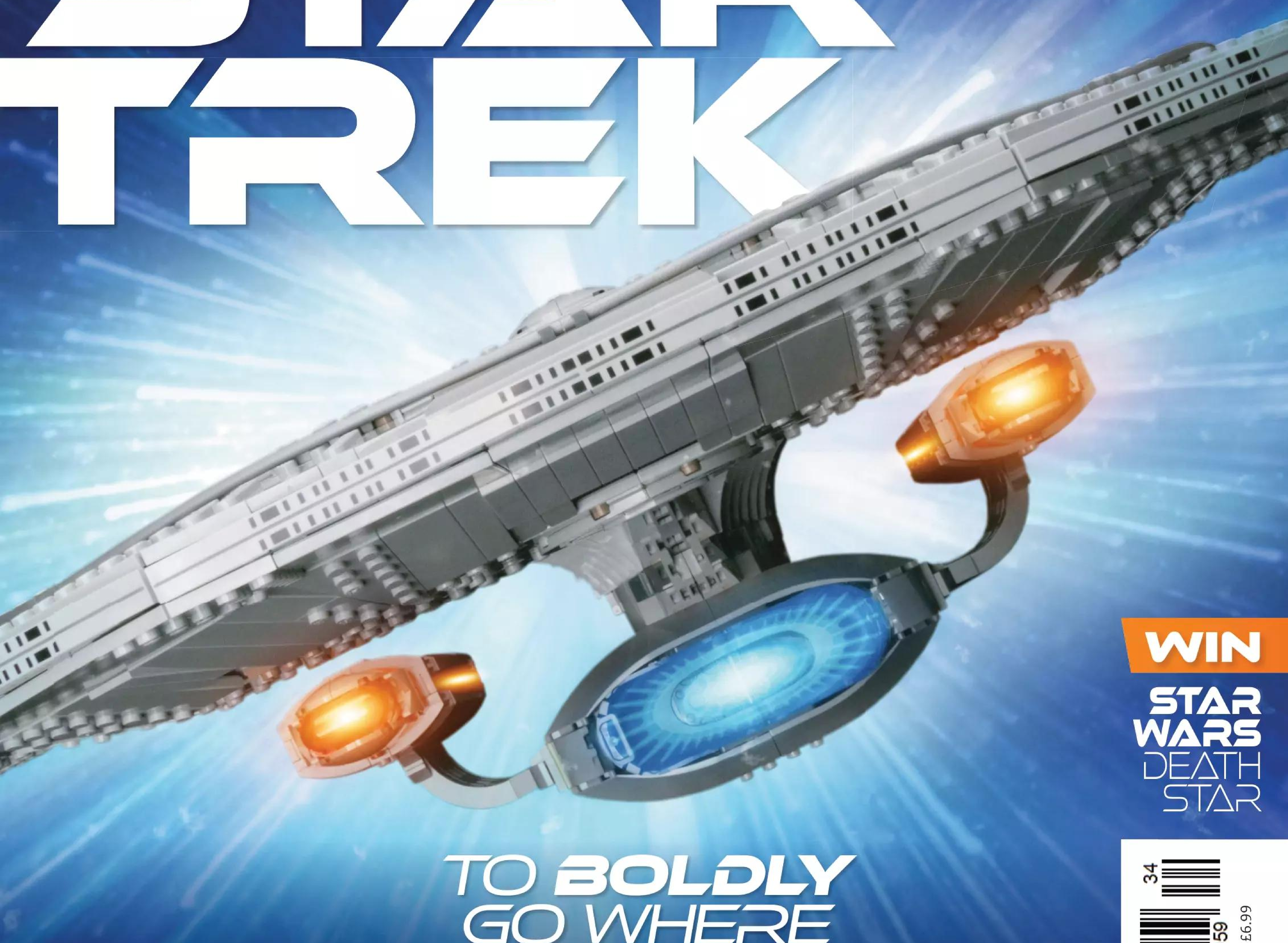

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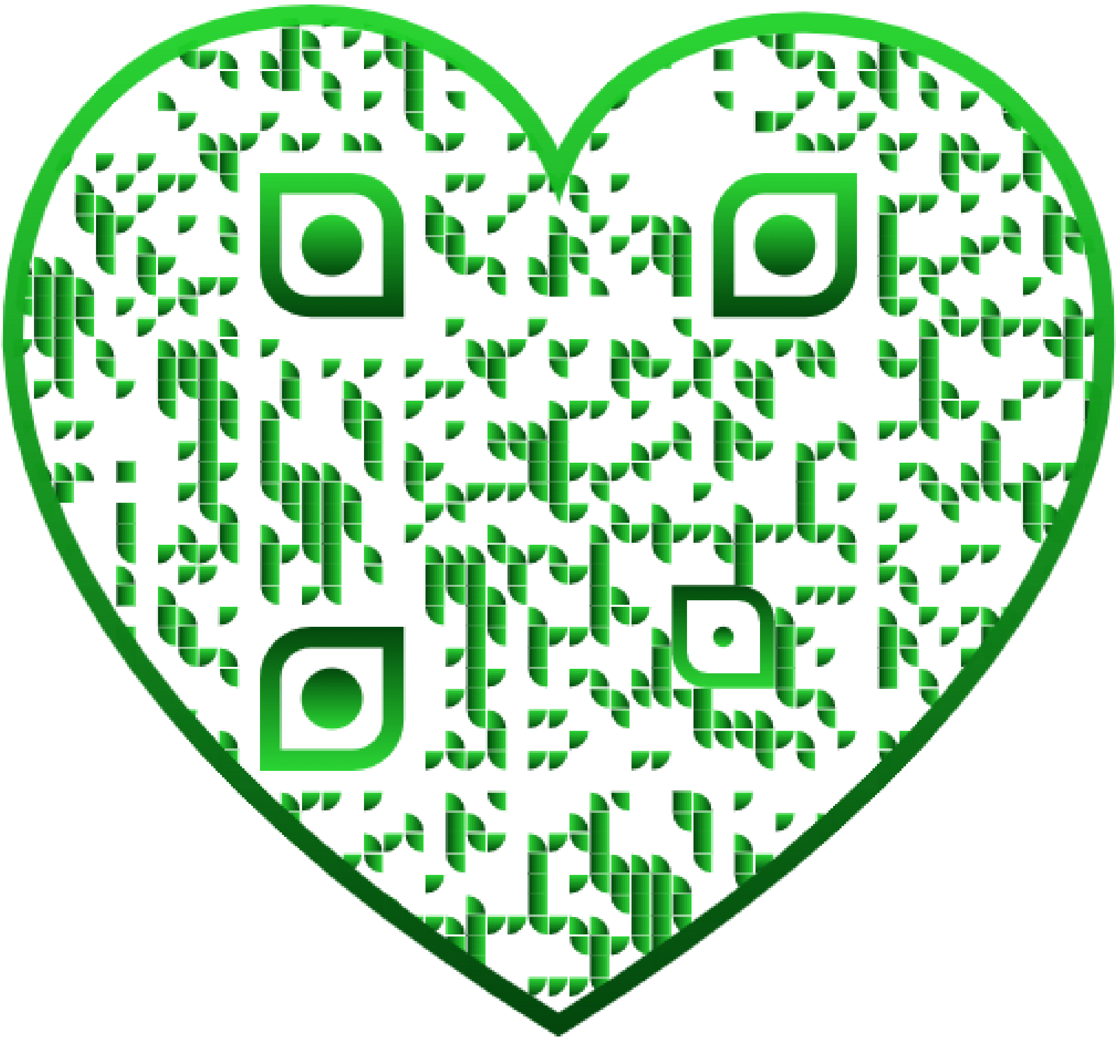

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THIS MONTH

It's always nice to see the LEGO Group launch a super-detailed grey spaceship set. I love adding new display models to my Star Wars collection… whoops. Wrong franchise. Finally, the design team has been given the opportunity to boldly go where no fan thought they could or would – and delivered the Enterprise from Star Trek: The Next Generation.

Grab yourself a cup of Earl Grey and get cosy, because Trek fans Senior Model Designer Hans Burkhard Schlömer and Graphic Design Manager Crystal Fontan share thoughts about their masterpiece this month, then Dave Cartlidge gets his hands on the set to see if the build engages him.

Cheeky as it is to suggest, the gang who will be building the Enterprise might have been waiting for the set for some time – and might even remember when the internet was shiny and new. Matt Chiles looks back at the earliest days of LEGO fandom, when brick devotees could finally connect with one another and share the hobby. It's a fascinating insight into the origins of everything that we enjoy today.

Fun as looking back at the old days is, there's plenty of good stuff going on in the LEGO portfolio now. Senior Model Designer Laura Perron joins me for a Build & Chat, in which we discuss the awesome Ideas sets she has worked on over the past year or two. Everyone in the design organisation is an expert secret keeper, but Laura takes that to the next level in a fun story she shares during our conversation.

Creativity is at the heart of DREAMZzz, the LEGO Group's most imaginative theme. Design Director Cerim Manovi talks about evolving the theme for its third year, while continuing to encourage builders to break out of the instruction book. The feature is illustrated by Design Master Matt Betteker's beautiful concept art that really gives you a taste of how the development process works.

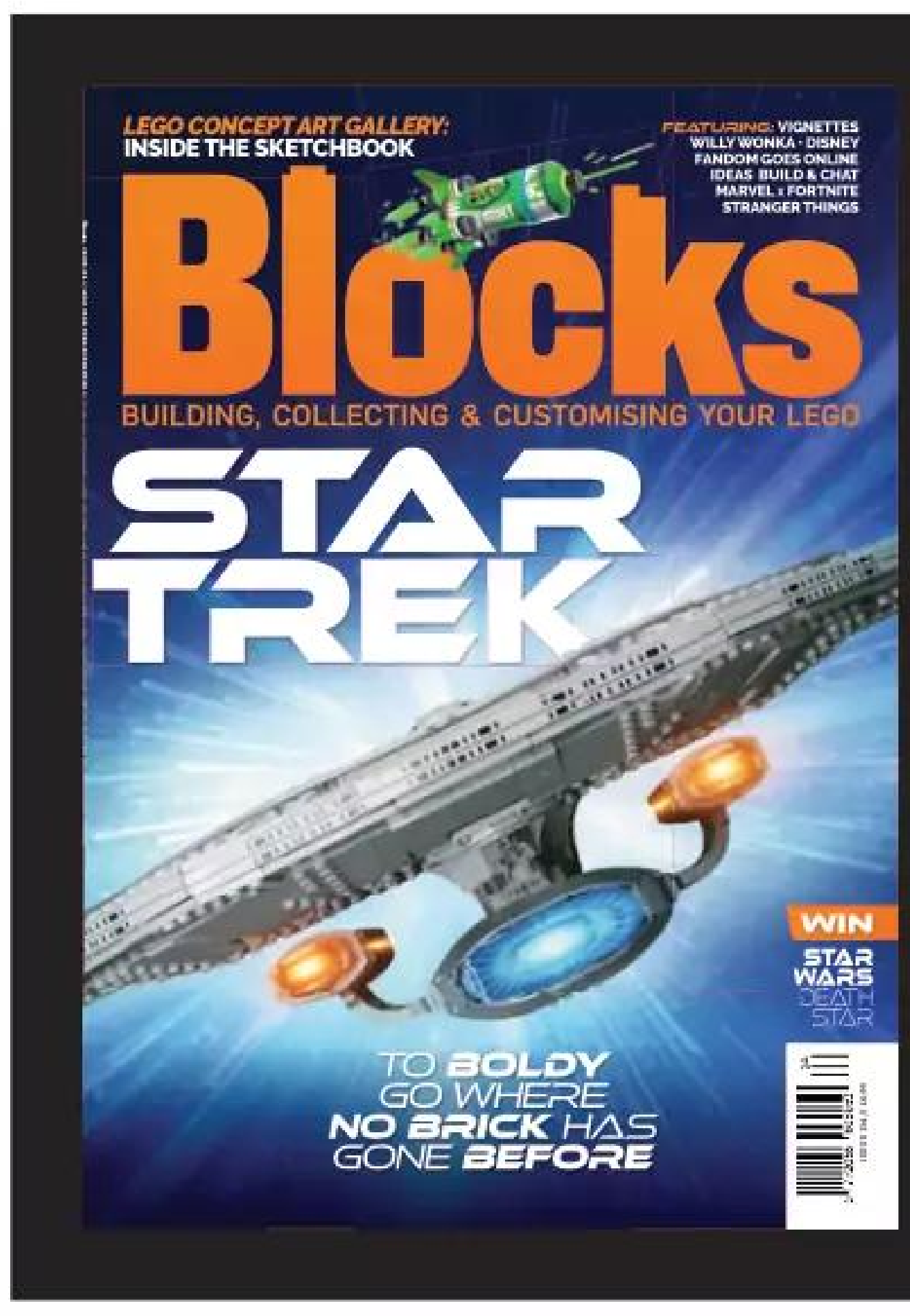
Daniel Konstanski takes Fortnite 77073 Battle Bus and coverts it to the awesome Stark Industries version that appeared in the game's Marvel season. He replaces the balloon with an Arc Reactor surrounded by fins and panels in dark red, with instructions for certain parts in case you want to try building it yourself.

The new Enterprise proves that as fans we should expect the unexpected. After all, those piles of elements can become anything – so whatever it is you want to create, grab some bricks and make it so.

Leg godt!

Graham

GRAHAM E. HANCOCK
Editor
graham@blocksmag.com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What we've been building…

Daniel enjoyed a peaceful moment in LEGO House. He assembled a flower and added it to the garden in Yellow Zone. Flower Garden is full of pastel colours so that you build something bright and attractive.

No-one told Graham that the controller wasn't working, but he was convinced that he was building his reflexes when playing LEGO Racers. It's a classic video game from 1999, with vehicles and tracks inspired by different themes.

Matt was building his brick budget at BrickCon in Seattle, selling Classic Space sets. He has seen the fandom evolve through the years – and from page 42, you can read his recollections on the earliest days of the online community.

In the Blue Zone at LEGO House, Anthony was tasked with creating a blue bus that you can play in. He took the assignment seriously and put something together to share with the minifigure boffins in the Build the Change lab.

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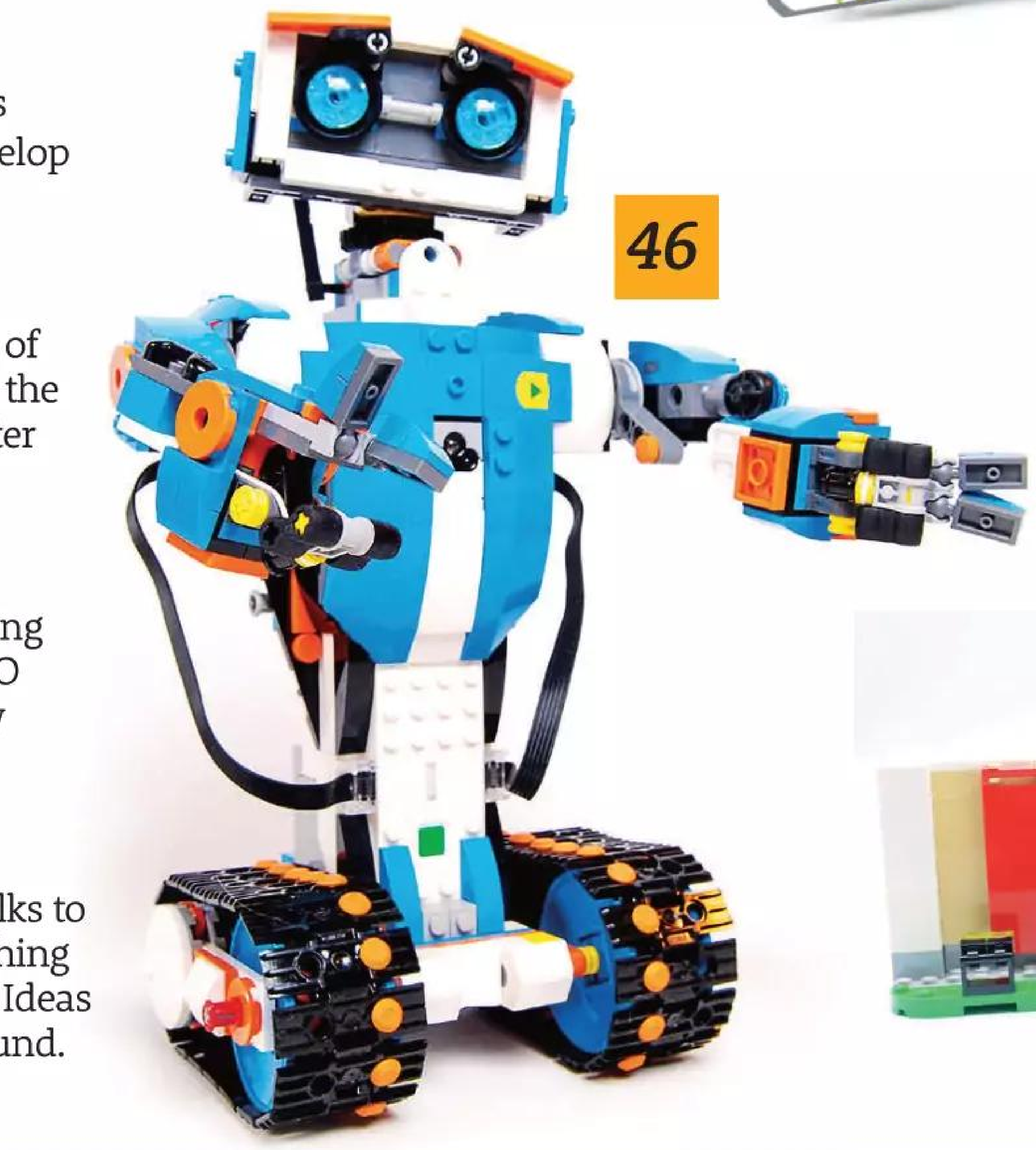

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Editor
GRAHAM E. HANCOCK
A LEGO expert who can't remember life without the brick, Graham loves using that knowledge to bring Blocks to readers every single month.

Build Expert & Historian
DANIEL KONSTANSKI
Both a builder and a collector, Daniel has extensively researched the LEGO Group's history, making him an unrivalled fount of knowledge.

Build Specialist
SIMON PICKARD
If there's a way to put two bricks together, Simon knows it. He's an experienced builder who is always discovering new techniques.

Features Writer
KAT REES-JAUKE
This life-long brick fan is always ready to dig deep into the latest sets to find out how they were conceptualised, designed and developed.

Features Writer
ANTHONY WALKER-COOK
With a passion for fantasy sets but a penchant for any box that features the LEGO logo, Anthony covers every aspect of the brick experience.

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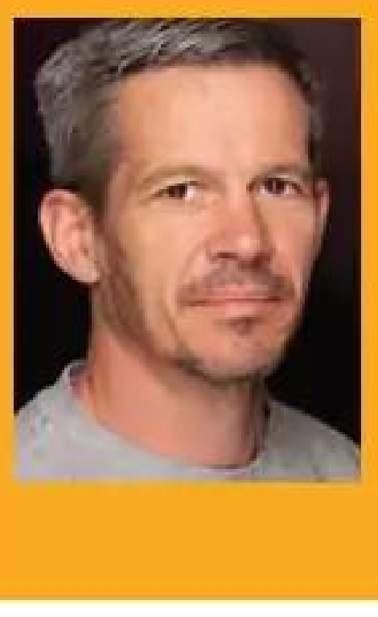
DAVE CARTLIDGE
Whether it's from Marvel Super Heroes, Friends, Technic or any other theme, Dave has the LEGO build know-how to assess the latest sets.

Build Curator
GENEVA DURAND
A 2x2 pillar of the community, Geneva is a respected member of the online creative LEGO scene with an expert eye for the best builds out there.

News Writer
RYAN EVERLETH
This LEGO aficionado has eclectic tastes, including Star Wars, Ideas and The Lord of the Rings. He always has a take on the latest news.



Photographer
PHIL WRIGHTON
Models never look better than when this prize-winning LEGO photographer has worked his magic to produce beautiful Blocks covers.

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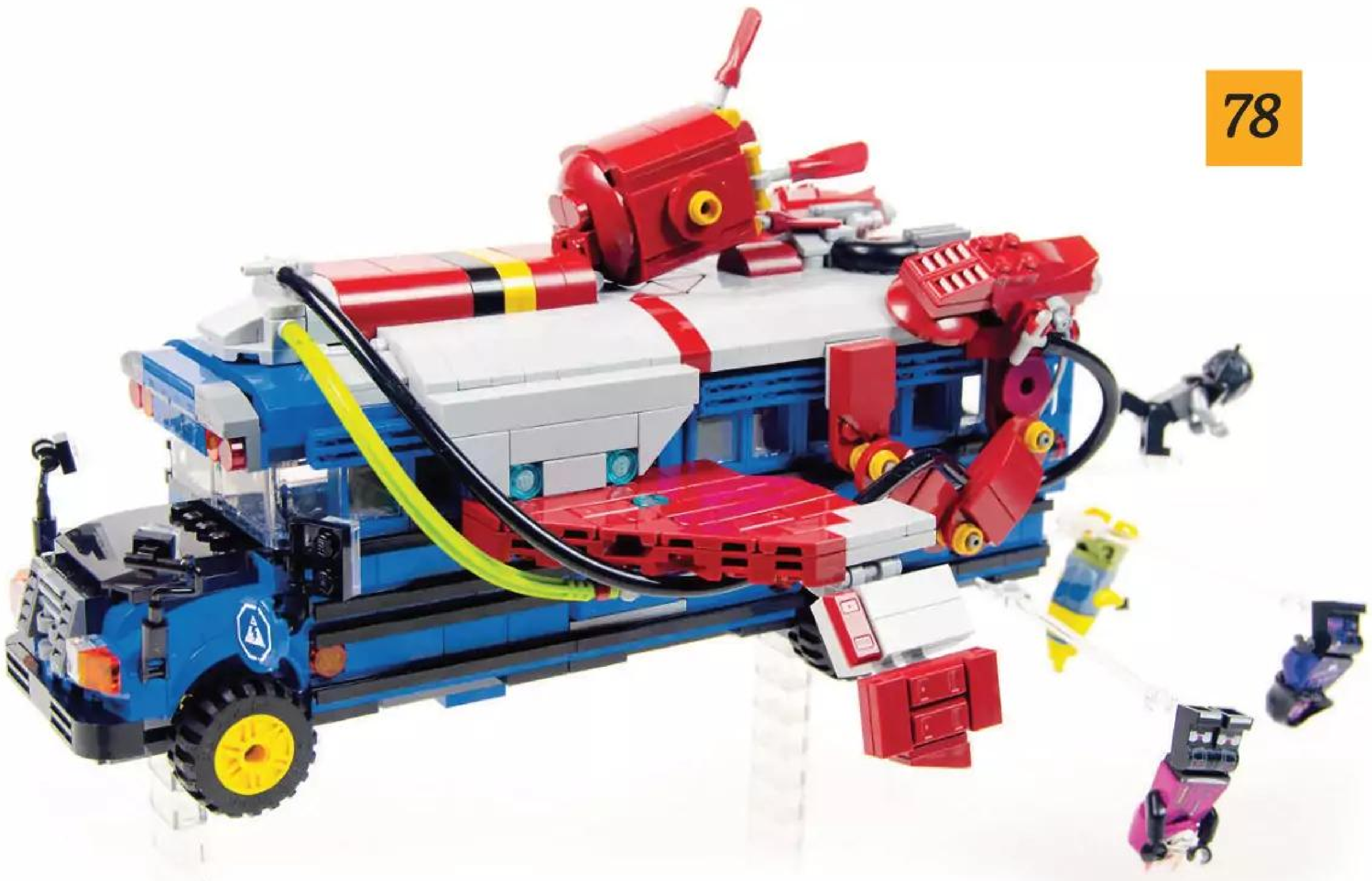

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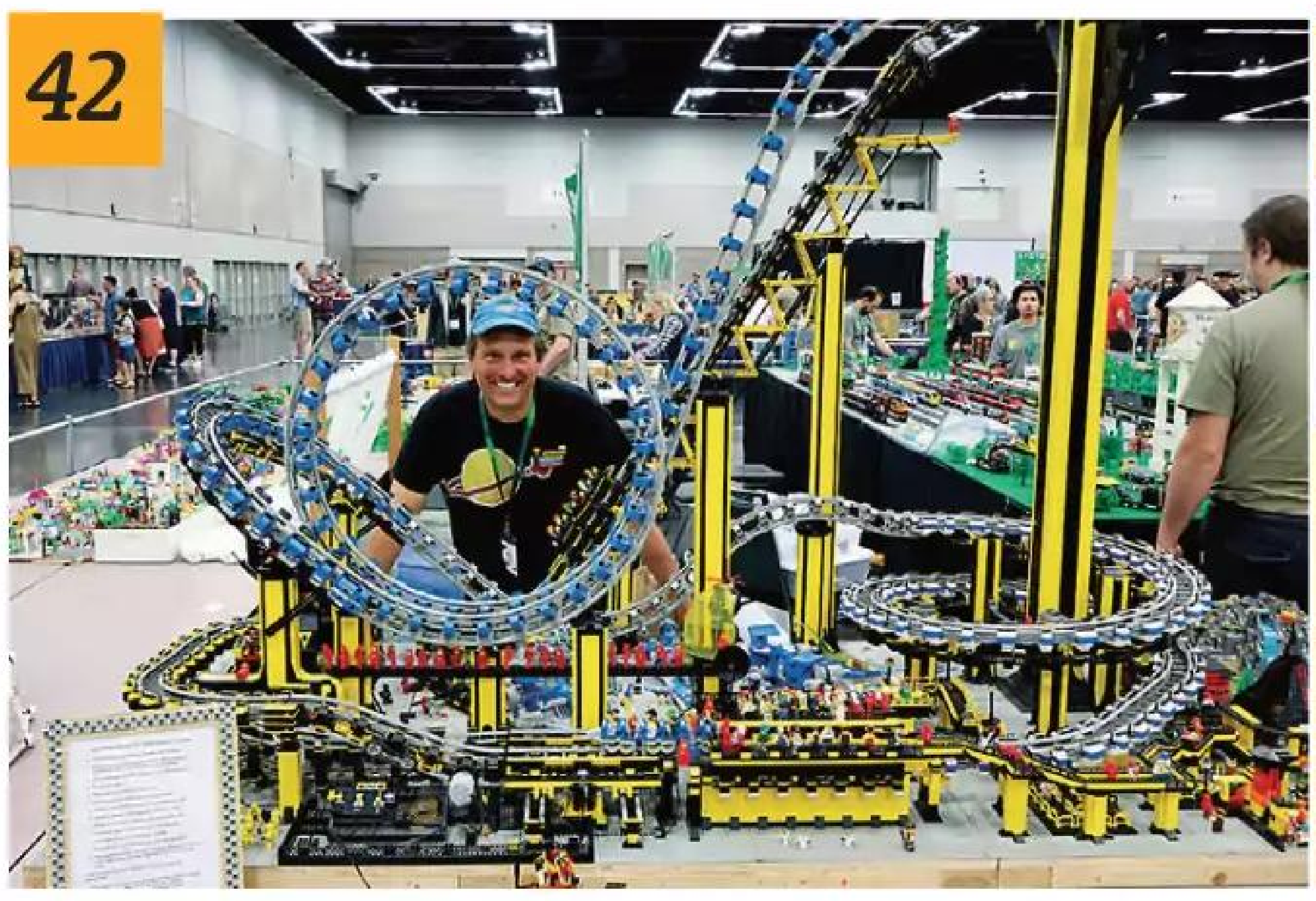

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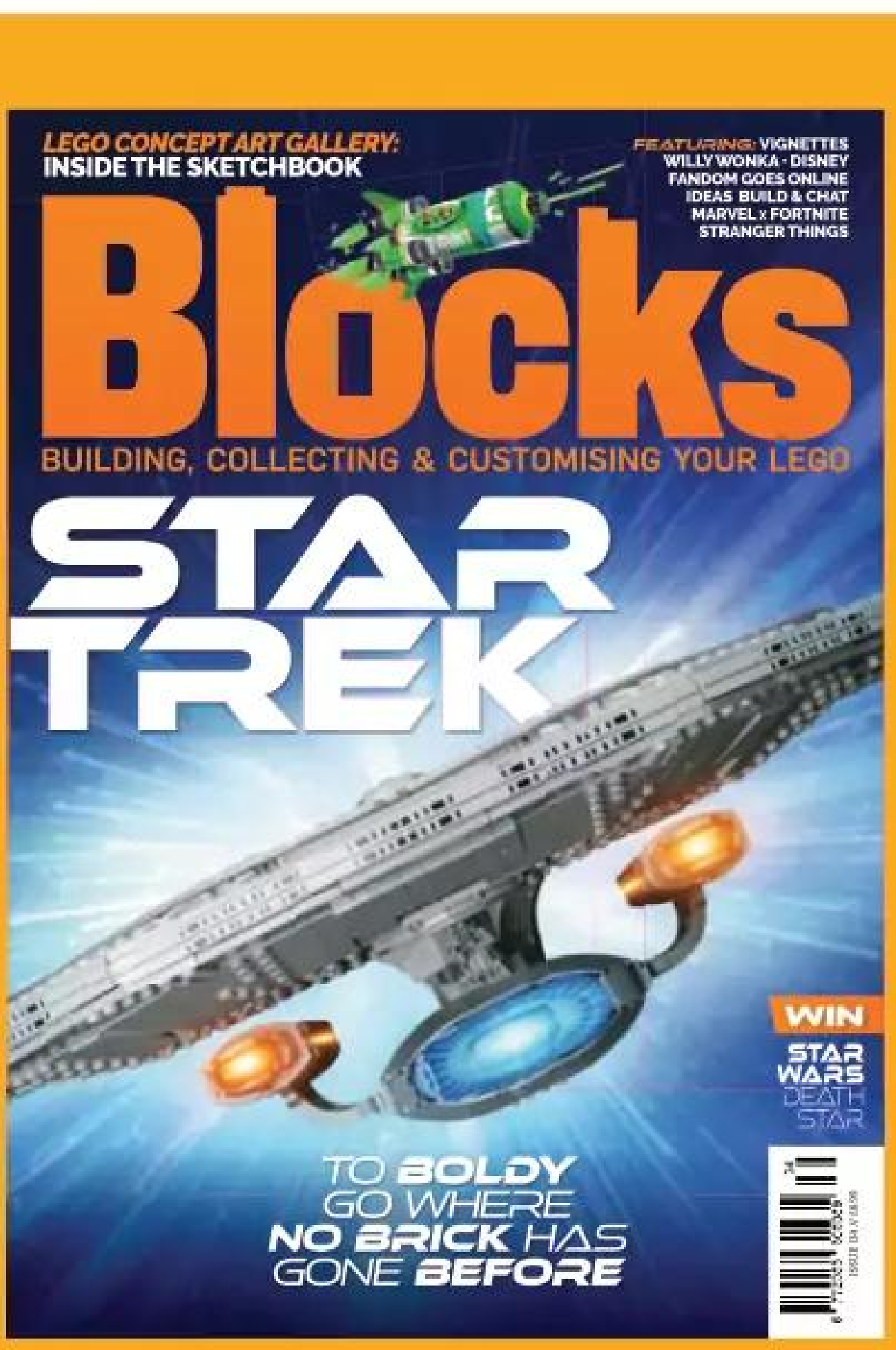

Cover image: Phil Wrighton

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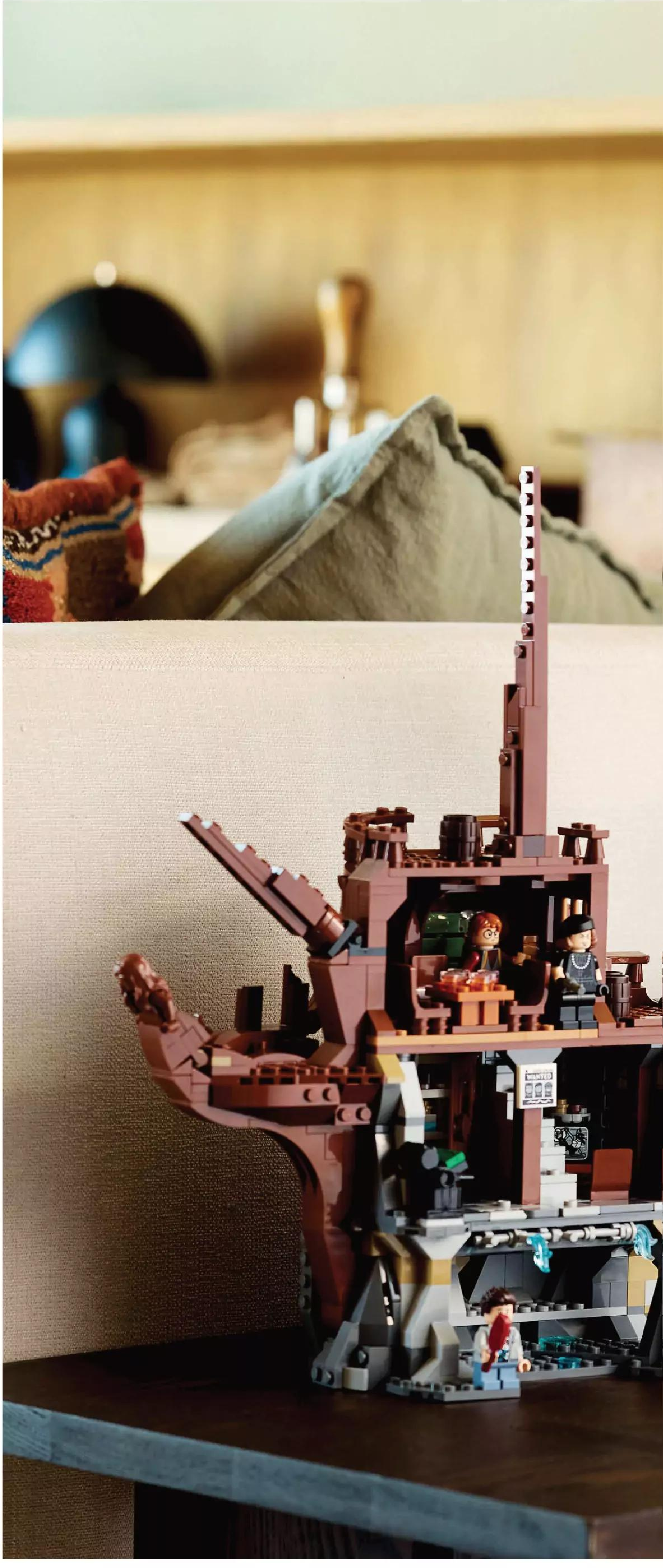
GOONIES NEVER SAY DIE!

An epic new set captures the action and adventure of the beloved 1980s movie



LEGO Ideas users have tried a few times to get The Goonies, one of the most beloved 1980s adventures, to become an official LEGO set beyond the single LEGO Dimensions add-on pack that has represented the flick so far. Multiple projects have reached the necessary 10,000 supporters, but none have managed to clear the last hurdle and make it into production.

But when LEGO Ideas hosted the If We Could Turn Back Time challenge in 2024, fan designer Vaggelis Ntezes saw an opportunity to try and finally get the classic film as an official model. And it turned out that the challenge was just what The Goonies needed — the LEGO Ideas team approved the concept and it won the fan vote, leading to the release of 21363 The Goonies.

The final set, consisting of 2,912 pieces, recreates the Inferno, One-Eyed-Willy's infamous ship, as a cross section, with the interior housing vignettes that recount the Goonies' quest for treasure.

"It was mostly based on Miguel's idea, which was very clever, having half the ship, then half the caves in front," said Senior Model Designer Marina Stampoli, on the topic of redesigning the model for official release. "We had to downscale it, of course, because his submission was huge once we built it. It was a challenge to set up all the rooms in a way that is accurate to the movie, but we had a good base to start from."

The scenes come complete with play features, letting the young at heart reenact their favourite scenes, even if the set does feature an 18+ label. You can send minifigures through the secret fireplace into the caves; the boulder trap is a very real threat and the Copper Bones Skeleton Key can release the trapdoor. There's even a feature to break the floor via the skeleton organ and send an unlucky minifigure sliding down to meet the octopus, which is based on a sequence that was cut from the movie.

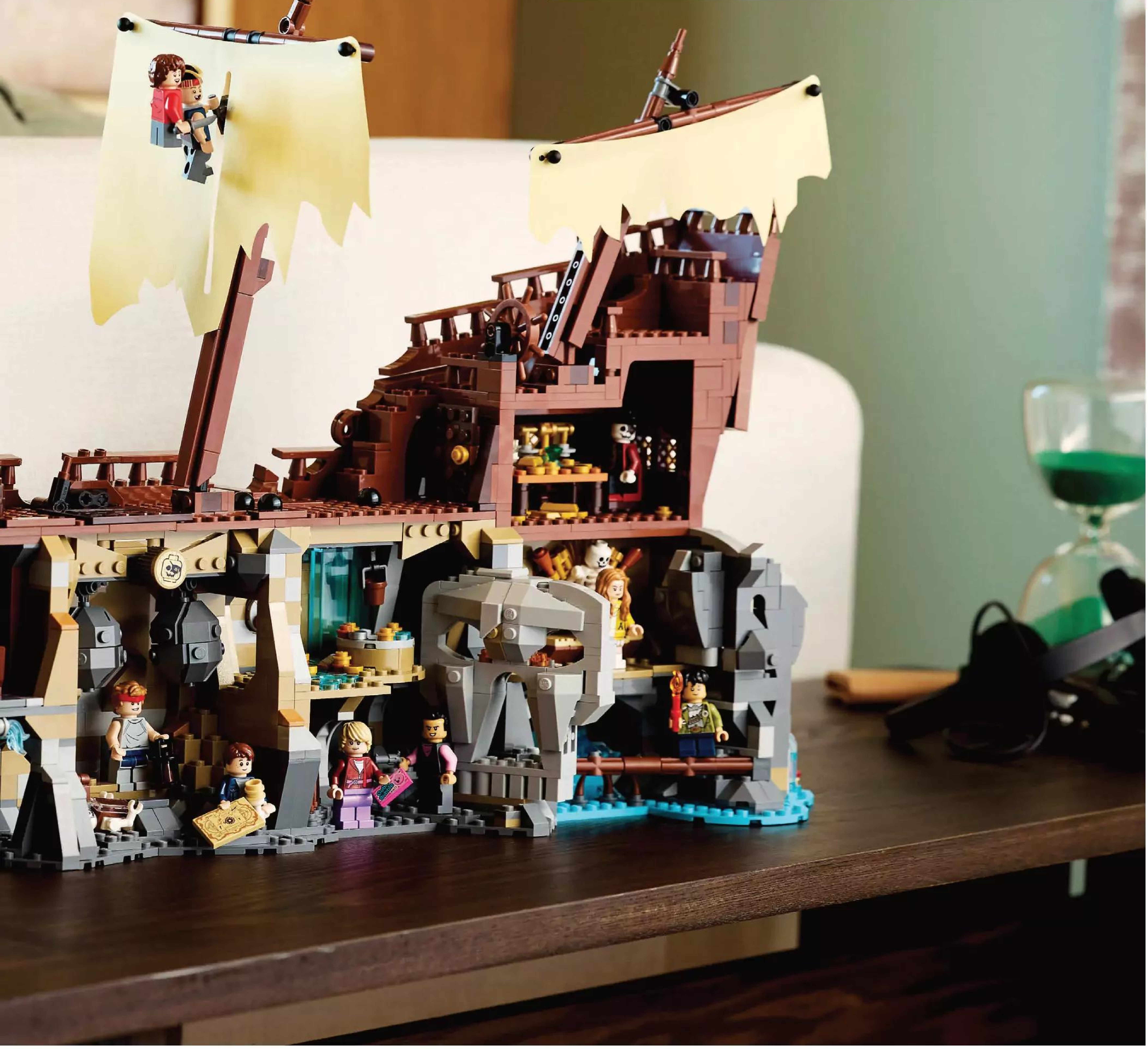
A healthy 12 characters make up the minifigure roster — and everyone is essential to the model. "The size of the set certainly helps," Design Manager Jordan Scott told Blocks. "But it's The Goonies. There isn't really anyone we can remove. They all go on the adventure together, so it would be a little weird if we removed one of the characters."

Characters such as Mikey, Brand, Mouth, Chunk and Data all make their minifigure debuts, and while Sean Astin is no stranger to minifigure depictions, this set features the first Josh Brolin minifigure outside of Thanos and Ke Huy Quan's first minifigure since 2009's Short Round. Sloth is the only Goonies character to have previously appeared as a minifigure and he gets a redesigned look to fit right in with the rest of the crew — including a dual moulded element for his bandana and pirate hat. One-Eyed Willy has a new skeleton face print that has — you guessed it — just one eye.

21363 The Goonies is available now. During its initial release window, official LEGO retail channels gave away 40773 The Walshes' Attic as a free bonus set.

RYAN EVERLETH

Right: *Senior Designer Marina Stampoli presents 21363 The Goonies.*



Below: *Vaggelis Ntezes submitted a Goonies model to a contest and now it has been adapted as an official set.*

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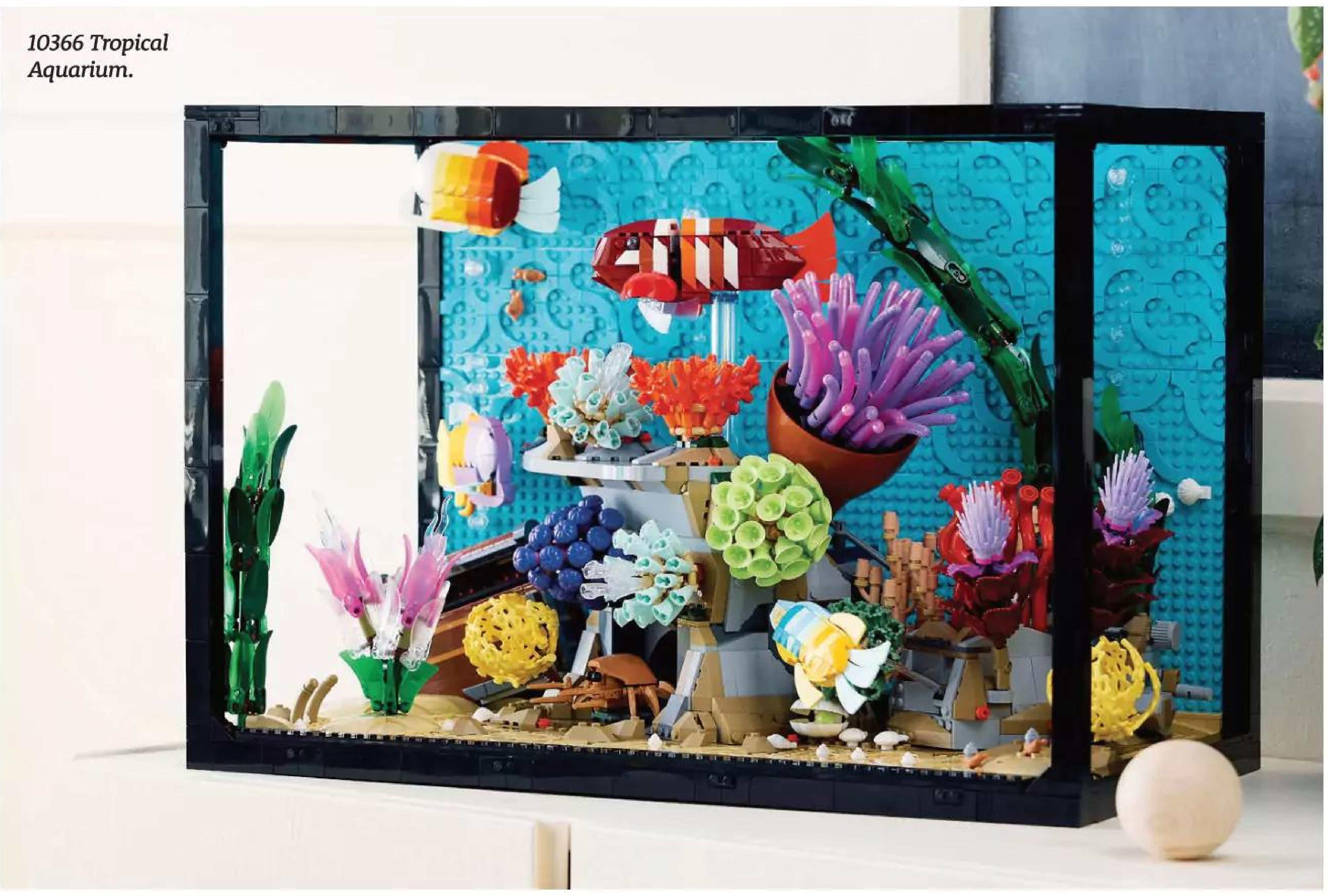
EXPLORE A VIBRANT, NAUTICAL WORLD

LEGO Icons dives fin-first into 10366 Tropical Aquarium, a display set inspired by the passion of aquarists


10366 Tropical Aquarium.

LEGO Creator has become the unofficial home of brick-built animals over the course of the past decade, even delving into the world of fishkeeping with the modestly-sized 31122 Fish Tank in 2021. Now, LEGO Icons is scaling up the concept for something bigger and more colourful – 10366 Tropical Aquarium is a truly display worthy fish tank made up of 4,154 pieces.

"I was just staring at one of our colour palettes and I thought. 'woah, could we just use all of these?'," said Senior Model Designer Sven Franic. "Thankfully our design process is a little bit more nuanced than that. We wanted to bring nature and put it in your living room. We are experiencing an interior design malaise in the sense of colour, so it was really fun working with a lot of different colours."

Many elements have been recoloured in the set, including the chef's hat, explorer's hat and mop head. Sven was trying to build a certain shape when the lampshade from 21357 Disney Pixar Luxo Jr. became available, so he took the opportunity to recolour it. More interesting part uses are sure to become apparent when building the set.

The massive element count goes into creating a lively scene of marine life, including fish, crustaceans, molluscs, sea worms, coral and more. The marine life is layered on top of a sandy base. It looks like the rockwork makes good use of SNOT techniques, creating some interesting angles on all sides of the terrain.

All of the plants are positioned at interesting angles and clear pieces give the impression that the fish are swimming. The designers let their imaginations run wild, rather than only sticking to real species of fish.

"Of course we wanted to create some level of interactivity," Sven said. The functions include a moving sea crab, swirling corals, an opening treasure chest and a swimming fish.

The rear of the tank is decorated with simple studs and curved tiles to provide a bit of blue backing to an otherwise waterless space. The black frame is also the only hint of the tank present in the model — there are no clear panels on any of the sides. That allows for a fully unobstructed view of the tank's interior, as even using large panel pieces would have created significant seams, though it does mean that dust is almost guaranteed to be 10366's nemesis.

RYAN EVERLETH

Left: *The crab can move in and out of its cave.*
Right: *One of the fish has a moving function.*

Ryan's take

"The high price tag makes me wonder about the nature of these large display sets."

I'll say it right out of the gate – I have no desire to purchase 10366 Tropical Aquarium. That's not to say that it's a bad model, objectively or subjectively, nor is it to say that I don't think it should exist. What 10366 is to me is the perfect example of something that I find myself questioning with many new sets... who exactly is the target audience?

Let me preface the answer by saying I think all the plants and fish in the aquarium look great. Some are naturally a bit more eye-catching than others, but on the whole they make for a charming little scene. And the recolours are so numerous that my colour blind eyes couldn't dream of deciphering them all. That's the makings of a fantastic LEGO set. So why my reservations?

I do not have enough of an interest in aquariums or aquatic life in general to justify the monster price tag on this thing. This is, at the time of writing, the most expensive LEGO Icons set without an IP or famous real-world thing as source material. And that's where my question of target audience comes in.

For instance, I'm a huge The Lord of the Rings fan and with very little like 10316 Rivendell on the market, purchasing the set is a reasonable decision (even if my wallet disagrees). Rivendell models aren't exactly a dime a dozen and it's made out of LEGO bricks, so it's a win-win. But with 10366, an aquarium enthusiast has more options — specifically options that involve real aquariums with real fish.

The point I'm trying to get at is that 10366 Tropical Aquarium is priced so that LEGO fans without a passion for aquariums are likely to stay away. But then aquarium fans will be faced with the reality that a real aquarium could be had for a similar price.

So who is the target audience? I don't doubt that there are fans who will appreciate this set and be thrilled to build it, so I'm glad it exists... but the high price tag makes me wonder about the future of these large display sets, and if as the prices keep growing, the market for them will shrink.

Brick CENTRAL

Get involved

BrickCentral is an online community of photographers who take creative photos of LEGO models and minifigures. We've always got some fun activities for LEGO fans to do like photography themes, contests, tips and community projects. Our Discord, Instagram and Tumblr communities are home to thousands of members from around the world who want to share and discover LEGO photography.

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The Brick Debate

Is 'price per piece' the best way to measure a LEGO set's value?

LEGO STAR WARS
KYLO REN'S COMMAND SHUTTLE

Ryan says...

"Fans should lean into subjectivity when evaluating value."

Price-to-part ratio of 10 pence per piece used to be the gold standard of determining a LEGO set's value within the online brick community. And while it is certainly still referenced today, it seems as if it has lost some of its status. Is that fall from fame warranted? I believe so.

The whole point of using price to part ratio to gauge the value of LEGO sets was to assign value to each individual piece, thus determining if the overall price was fair. But that deceptively simple maths of 10 pence per piece does not provide a complete understanding of value.

A set's price to part ratio doesn't account for a great deal, including the size of the parts, number of minifigures, overall size and general appearance. The first two are pure maths — a larger element costs more to produce than a smaller one, so a set skewing either way can throw off the golden ratio. It's a similar deal with minifigures – those parts just cost more.

When it comes to the latter two, it's more of a subjective case. Regardless of piece count, does a set look like it's worth its price? Is there enough end product there to justify its cost? And, perhaps most importantly, do you like how it looks?

As much as I'd love to provide a silver bullet solution to accurately determining value, I don't think there is one. Price per gram is a recent attempt at finding a new way to gauge if a set is a good deal or not, but that can have its own similar shortcomings. After all, 31203 World Map's 11,695 pieces should be a bargain at £214.99... but that set is almost entirely made up of single studs.

Thus, as unscientific an answer as this might sound, I think that fans should lean into subjectivity when evaluating value. Price per piece or price per gram or price per whatever can provide a solid baseline for judging a set's price — something with a price per piece over 20 pence is probably best avoided at full retail price — but it shouldn't be the only way to evaluate a set.

After all, we buy LEGO sets because we like them. I don't think we should be afraid to fully judge a set's value on our own subjective opinions. Just because something may be up around 15 pence per piece, that doesn't automatically make it a bad value, nor does a low ratio make it a great deal. Just buy what you like, based on what you like and how much you're willing to spend.

RYAN EVERLETH

Kat says...

"I always check the price per piece before buying a set. It's the best indicator of whether a set is fairly priced."

LEGO sets are not getting any cheaper and it can sometimes be difficult to tell whether a new model is worth its full retail price. There are a lot of factors that play into how a LEGO set is priced, including whether it includes new elements, exclusive moulds or is a licensed product.

I always check the price per piece before buying a set or finalising a review for a model. It's the best indicator of whether a set is fairly priced or significantly more expensive compared to models of a similar piece count.

To better understand the importance of price per piece, it's worth clarifying the numbers. This statistic is based on dividing the number of pieces by the cost of the set. Usually a LEGO set is around 9 to 10 pence per piece (12 – 13 cents per piece in US dollars). This is a very important benchmark as these sets are priced fairly and anything below this average is an absolute bargain, even at full price.

But what about sets above this average price per piece? This is where I think this statistic is absolutely vital. If there are no obvious reasons for a set to be more expensive than others, such as a cast of exclusive minifigures with leg printing or Powered Up! components with the batteries included, then it may indicate that a product is overpriced.

A perfect example is on shelves right now – 75406 Kylo Ren's Command Shuttle. This is a midi-scale display model of a Star Wars ship. Apart from a little printed plaque, it has no special or exclusive elements or minifigures. Yet its full retail price is the equivalent of 15.5 pence (18.1 cents) per piece. I love The Force Awakens and anything Kylo Ren related (one of my dogs is named Kylo) but that retail price is ridiculous for such a tiny model.

Price per piece can demonstrate when a set is not worth its full retail price tag. It is therefore extremely important for making informed decisions about potential purchases. If a set has a decent price per piece then it's probably worth getting it directly from the LEGO Store for points or to acquire gift with purchase bonuses. If the number is above average then you should go to another retailer when they reduce the price.

KAT REES-JAUKE

IDEAS
Latest

DOWNTON ABBEY, POWER RANGERS AND MORE

LEGO Ideas has announced more sets than ever before from a single review, with a broad range of IPs and original concepts

LEGO Ideas has greatly matured and built a strong identity since it first began as a pilot program in Japan under the name LEGO CUUSOO in 2008. But one thing has remained largely consistent over the years with Ideas – fans always expect just one or two sets to be approved every review phase, no matter how many made it to 10,000 votes.

That precedent has now been shattered, thanks to the First 2025 Review. Design Manager Jordan Scott announced the approval of six projects to become official sets, with an additional three heading to the Parking Lot for further evaluation by the LEGO Ideas team.

The six selected products represent a wide variety of IPs and model types. E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial by Lafabrick creates the lovable alien as a large-scale character akin to 21361 Gremlins: Gizmo, La Catrina by yop1172 is also a statue, drawing inspiration from Mexican culture and Smurf Village by The Half Blood Baron captures the little blue characters going about life in their mushroom village.

Ramen by Micdud offers a charming still life model of a popular dish, Go Go Power Rangers! Megazord by TrumanBricks packs a hefty punch with a towering figure that can be split into its five component mechs and Downton Abbey: Highclere Castle by BRO3 is a recreation of the iconic British house.

As Downton Abbey leaves the Parking Lot, three new sets have been placed there for further review. Daft Punk Concert by RobotRock, Golden Girls by Martin_Studio and The Old Man and the Sea by Iyan ha are all under further consideration. A final decision will be made for each over the course of the next few review phases. With Downton Abbey making it out, fans of these projects have reason to remain hopeful.

That makes for a total of nine projects either making it to the finish line or getting a second chance, so the results of the First 2025 Review point towards an interesting future for LEGO Ideas. There are currently 146 product ideas under evaluation as part of the Second 2025 Review, so there is certain to be a lot of rejection even if there's another bumper selection.

It is too early to tell if more approvals per review is to become the norm, but it has at least become a possibility. And that means better chances for builders to see their ideas on shelves and for fans to add their favourite concepts to their collection.

RYAN EVERLETH

Winning build

On The Brickside's Seaside Delight has claimed the top prize in the Build Your Perfect Vacation challenge, which asked builders to design a landscape that showcases the place they would most like to enjoy on holiday. The winning model uses nearly 6,000 pieces to create a picturesque town on a Greek Island, the whites and blues of the building fitting perfectly with the rolling waves. The town features a traditional taverna, an inn, a harbourmaster's office, all complete with full interior detail, and, of course, the all-important beach to soak in the summer sun.

Gathering support

Mildly disturbing animation aside, The Polar Express has become one of the most treasured of family Christmas movie traditions, and MadamGalacticRetox hopes to see that holiday spirit captured in a LEGO brick recreation of the train. The engine and its two carriages are built slightly below minifigure scale, but the carriages are minifigure compatible if the roof and one wall are removed. As it is currently proposed, the engine isn't motorised but certainly could offer the potential to be modified as such, so fans could have a LEGO Polar Express looping around their Christmas trees.

In the pipeline

Snoopy – Campfire

Tintin Space Rocket

The X-Files

Wallace & Gromit

Contest of the Month

VIGNWEEK

A fast-paced competition with daily deadlines forces builders to be both quick and creative

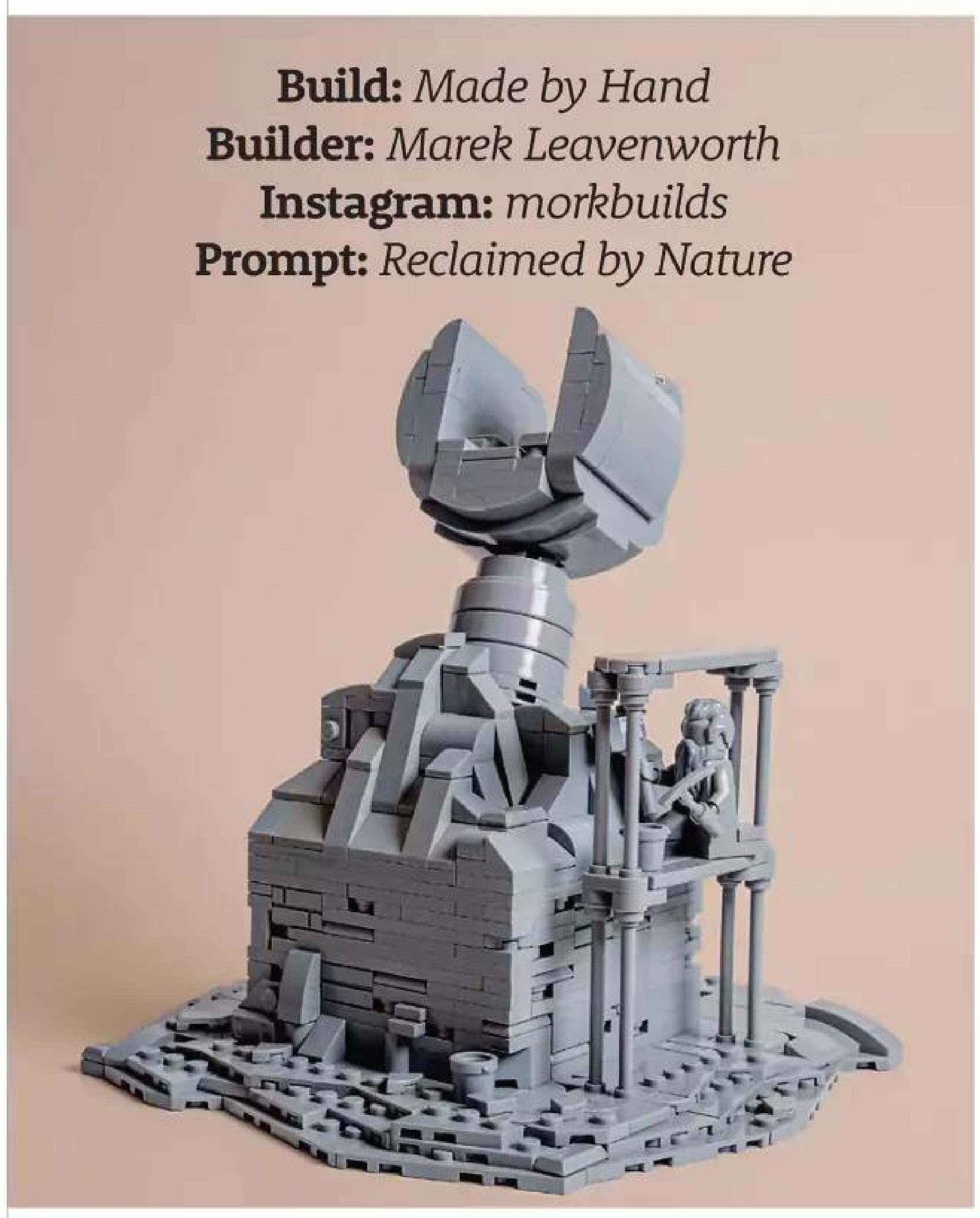
A vignette has become a standard category for a certain type of LEGO creation; a small model that feels like it has been lifted out of a larger world — usually not more than 32x32 studs large, easy to take in at a single glance, full of intricate detail for those who look closer. Vignettes are perennially popular, an accessible way for builders to dabble in new genres. For those ready to take vignette building to the next level, Rebel LUG hosts an annual week-long competition, challenging builders to churn out a vignette a day, with a new prompt for each one.

GENEVA DURAND

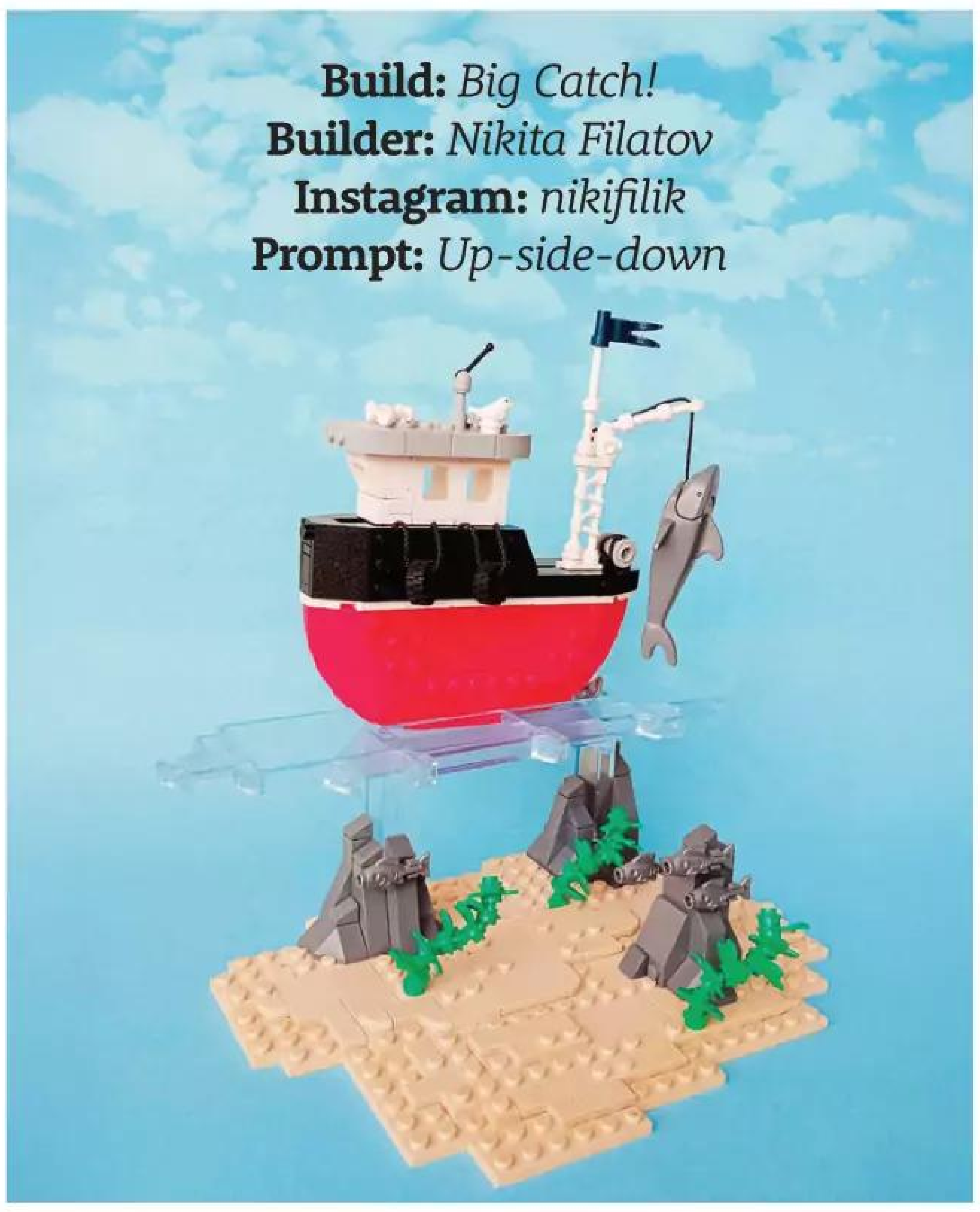
Get involved

Instagram: *@rebellug*
Website: *rebellug.com*

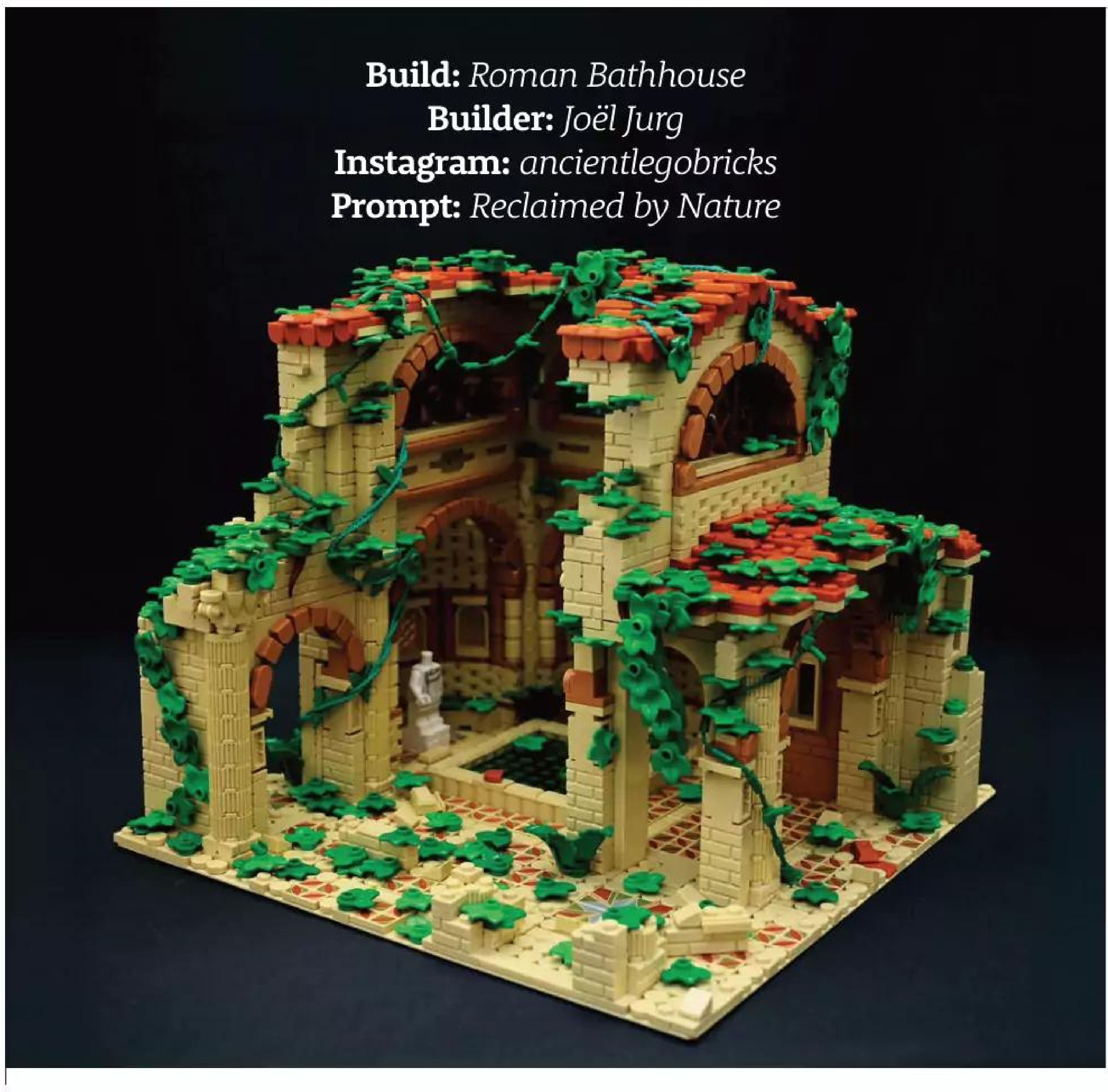
Build: *Prospect-9 Roams Free*
Builder: *Marek Leavenworth*
Instagram: *morkbuilds*
Prompt: *Reclaimed by Nature*


Build: *Made by Hand*
Builder: *Marek Leavenworth*
Instagram: *morkbuilds*
Prompt: *Reclaimed by Nature*

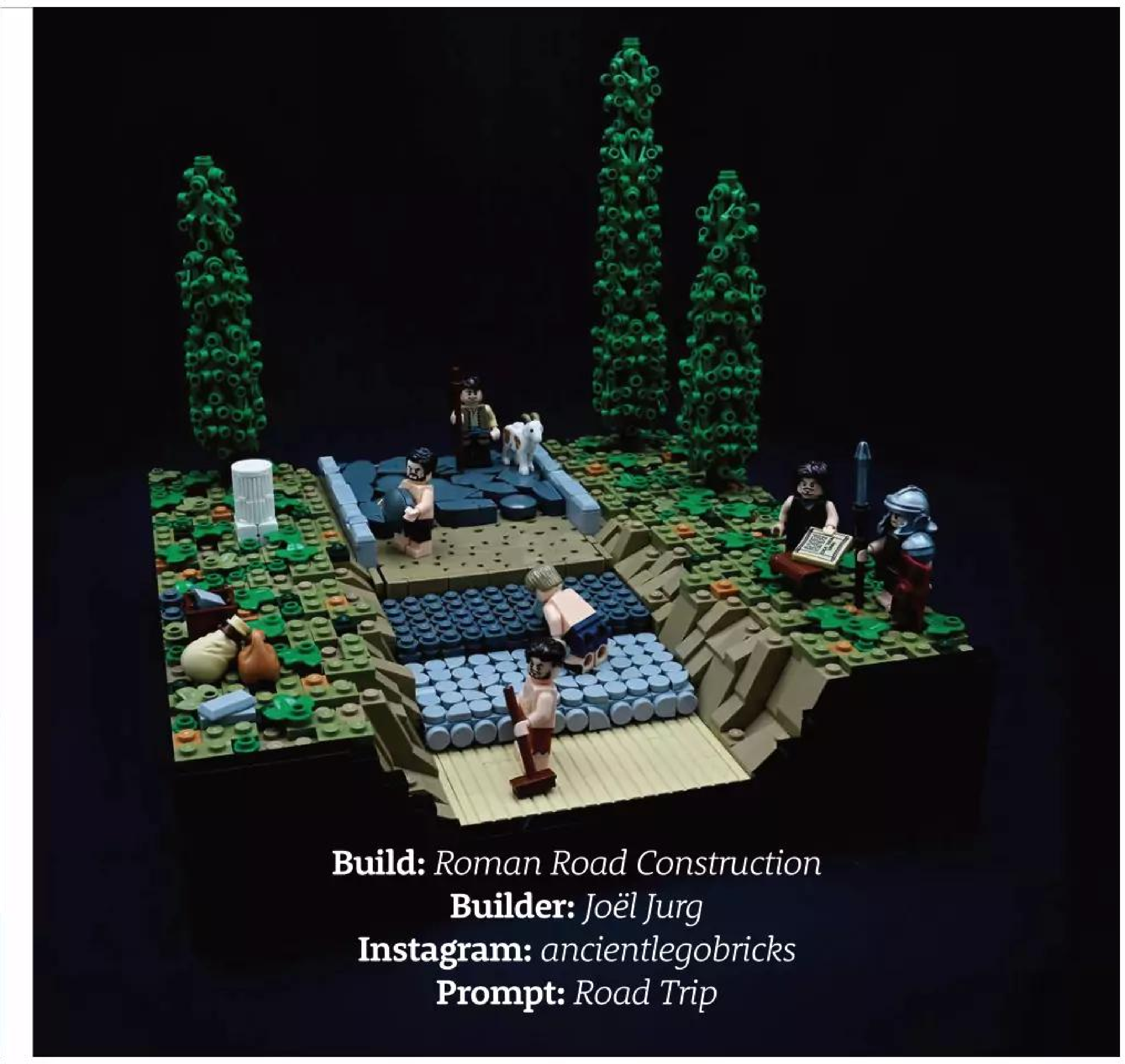
Build: *Aerobatics*
Builder: *Nikita Filatov*
Instagram: *nikifilik*
Prompt: *Up-side-down*


Build: *Big Catch!*
Builder: *Nikita Filatov*
Instagram: *nikifilik*
Prompt: *Up-side-down*

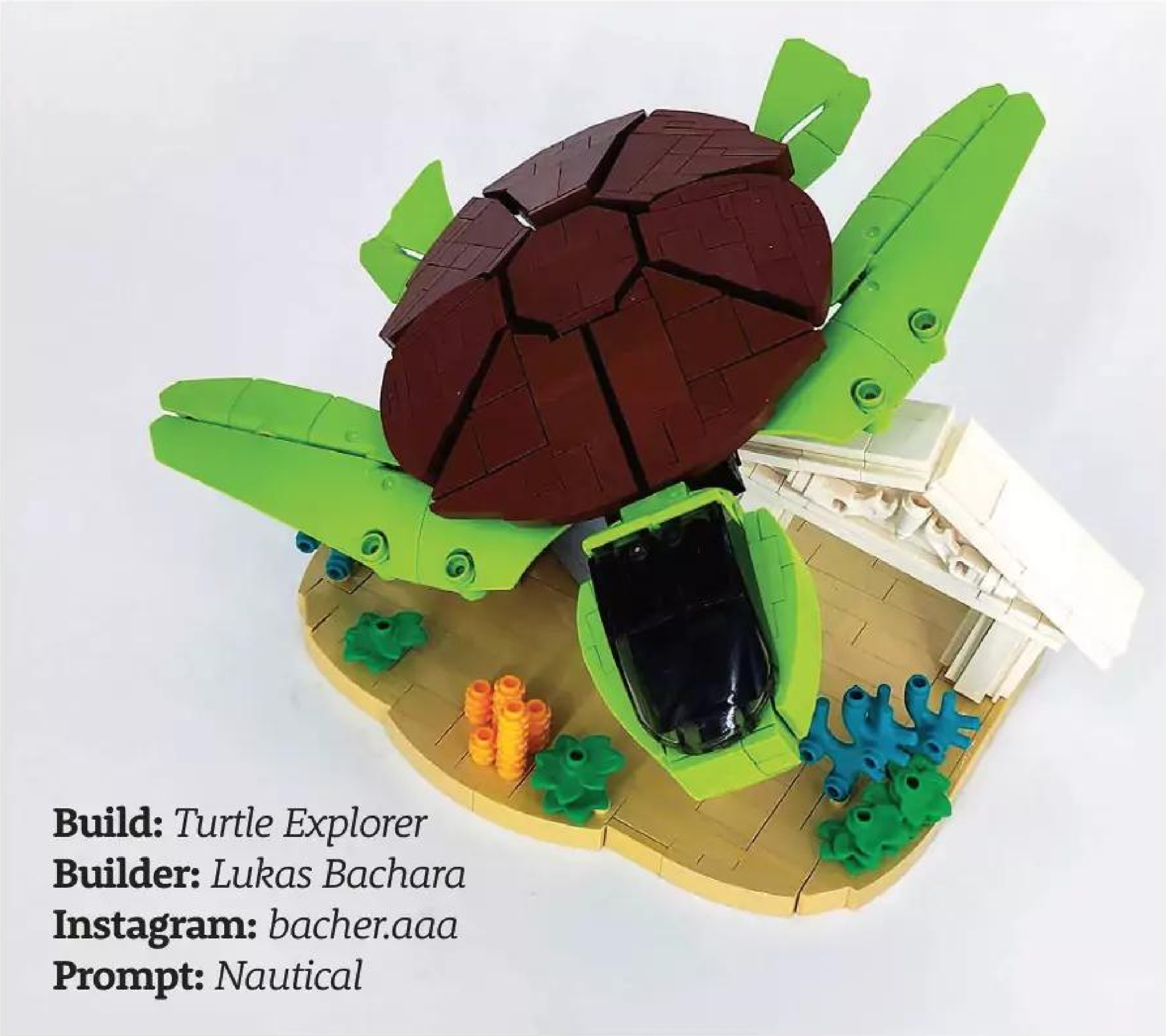
Build: *Into the Icelandic Wilderness*
Builder: *Andres Cazenave-Tapie*
Flickr: *CRCT Productions*
Prompt: *Road Trip*



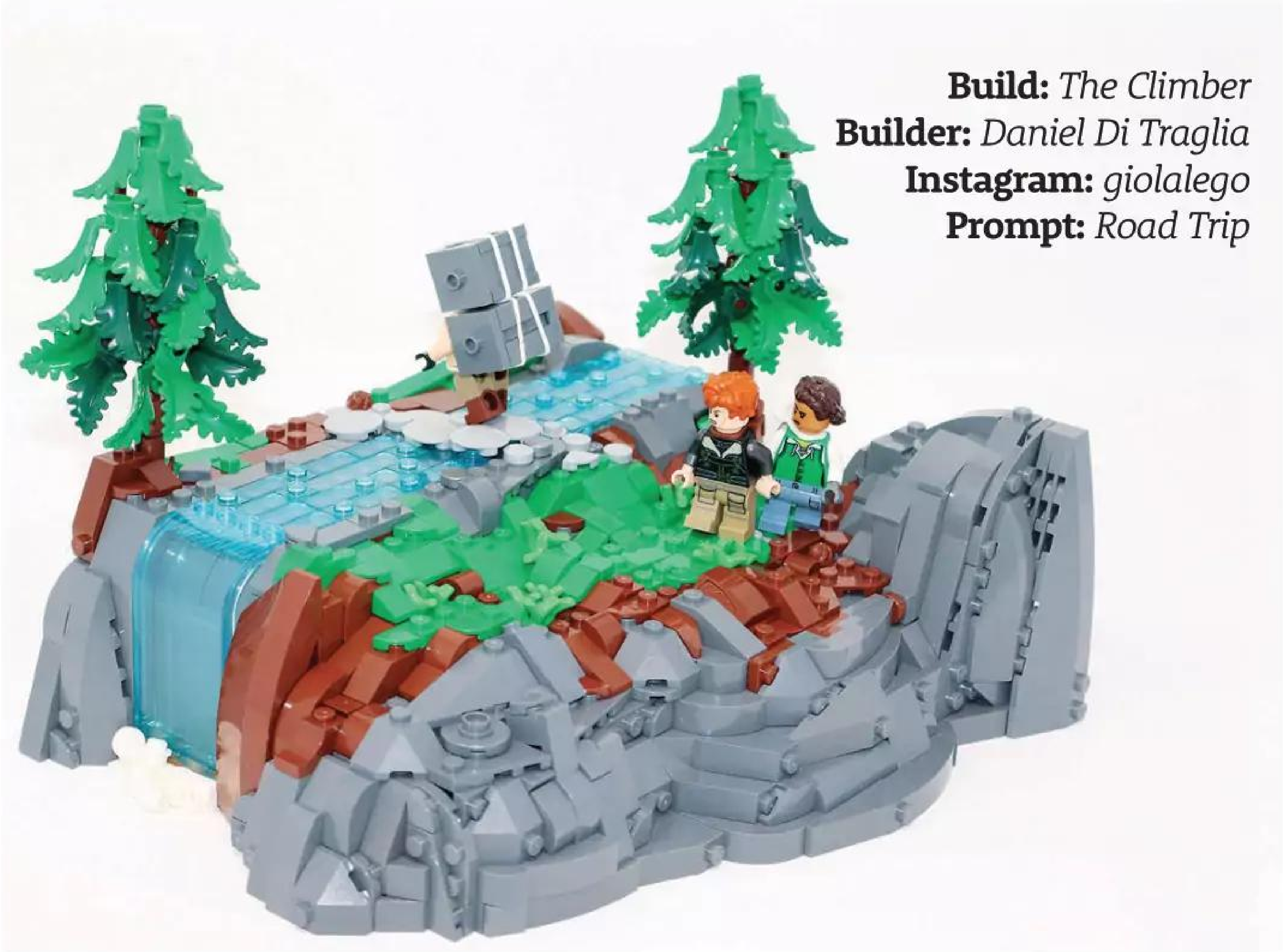
Build: *Roman Bathhouse*
Builder: *Joël Jurg*
Instagram: *ancientlegobricks*
Prompt: *Reclaimed by Nature*



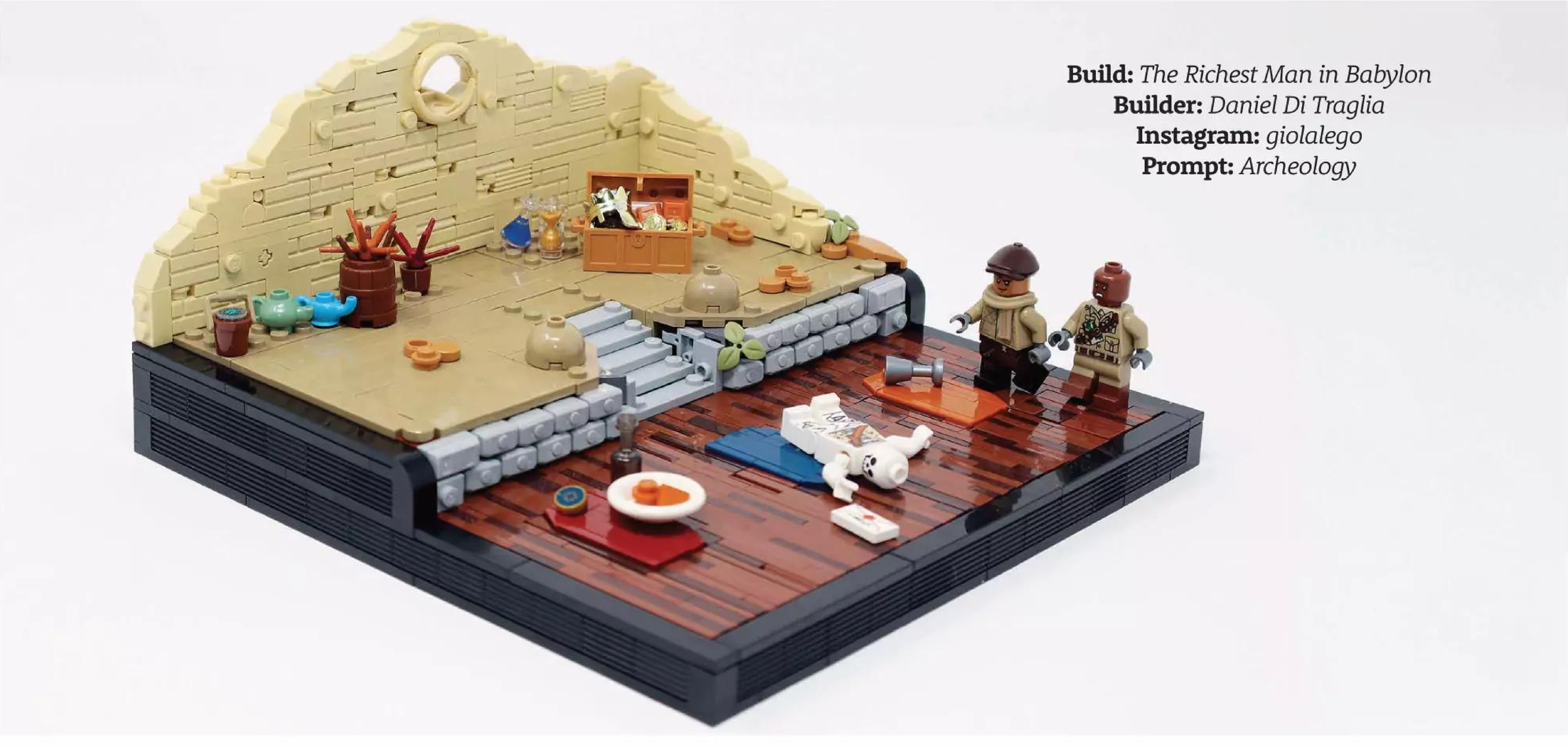
Build: *Roman Road Construction*
Builder: *Joël Jurg*
Instagram: *ancientlegobricks*
Prompt: *Road Trip*



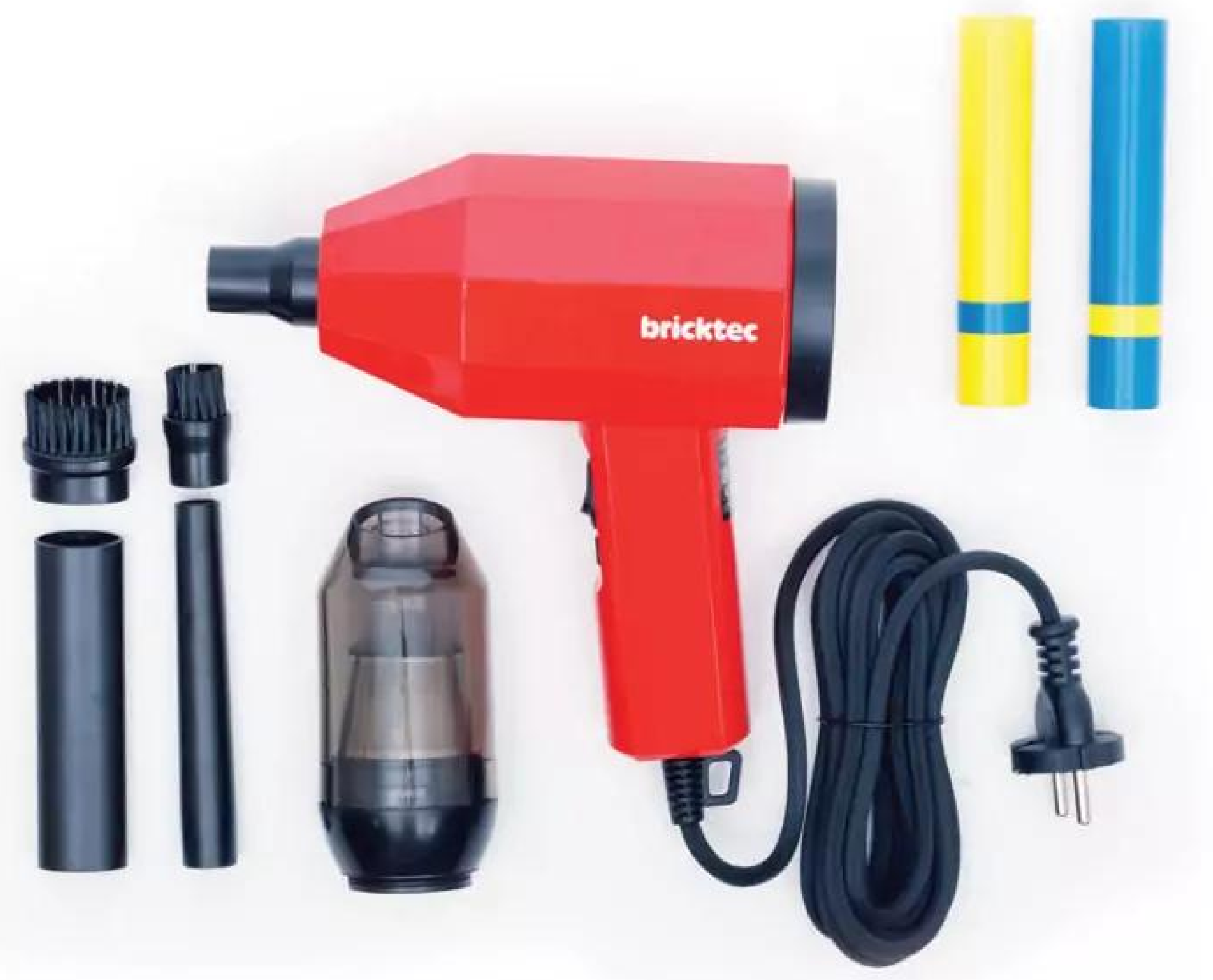
Build: *Turtle Explorer*
Builder: *Lukas Bachara*
Instagram: *bacher.aaa*
Prompt: *Nautical*



Build: *The Climber*
Builder: *Daniel Di Traglia*
Instagram: *giolalego*
Prompt: *Road Trip*



Build: *The Richest Man in Babylon*
Builder: *Daniel Di Traglia*
Instagram: *giolalego*
Prompt: *Archeology*



Q&A

BRICKTEC

ITDusters is used to keeping tech clean – but now the company has a product to solve LEGO fans' perennial problem

All you want is to display your LEGO models, whether they are sets you have built from instructions or original creations you have poured your heart and soul into. But within a week of being on display, they are attracting dust.

ITDusters may have the solution – Charlie Barry explains to Blocks magazine how the team came up with a product specifically for cleaning collectibles.

Blocks: What products does your company typically make?

Charlie Barry: IT Dusters has been designing and manufacturing specialist cleaning tools for over a decade. Our flagship product, the CompuCleaner, quickly became one of the most trusted electric air dusters for safely cleaning PCs, consoles and other electronics. Over time, we noticed that customers were also using our air dusters for things like model railways, display figures and LEGO builds — so we set out to create something specifically for collectors and hobbyists.

How did you discover that LEGO fans face a challenge in cleaning their models?

A few of us collect LEGO sets and other display pieces ourselves, and we know how frustrating dust can be. Once it settles, it's almost impossible to remove without knocking parts loose or leaving marks. We also noticed online discussions from LEGO builders and collectors sharing improvised cleaning methods — everything from makeup brushes to air cans — and that made it clear there was a gap for a safe, purpose-built solution.

What sort of solutions did you consider to help people clean their LEGO models?

We tried a few ideas — soft brushes, anti-static cloths, and low-power vacuums — but none struck the right balance between precision and safety. Brushes tend to just move dust around, air cans can be too harsh or wasteful, and small vacuums risk picking up parts. We wanted something compact, effective, and satisfying to use — a proper collector's tool rather than a modified household device.

How did you land on the solution you came up with?

That led to BrickTec — a 2-in-1 blower and vacuum system powered by a 500-watt motor. One side delivers a strong, focused airflow that blasts away dust without ever touching the model, while the other transforms into a gentle precision vacuum that safely collects debris. It's lightweight, ergonomic, and includes a built-in LED light to reveal hidden dust in display cases or behind models.

What sort of attachments does it include? How do they help with cleaning?

BrickTec comes with a complete set of interchangeable nozzle and brush attachments, giving collectors flexibility for any cleaning task. It includes two handheld twist-and-slide brushes for quick surface cleaning, plus two brush-tipped nozzles (small and large) and two standard airflow nozzles for focused dust removal. The brush-tipped nozzles are ideal for dislodging debris in tight spaces, while the handheld brushes are perfect for gentle surface cleaning on larger builds. Together, they make it easy to tackle everything from broad panels to intricate display details safely and efficiently.

What are the advantages of cleaning with air over other options?

Air cleaning is quick, precise and completely contact-free. It removes dust from tight spaces without the risk of scratching, lifting decals or loosening small parts — and unlike disposable air cans, BrickTec's reusable motor system is far more sustainable and cost-effective. Combining the control of air with the convenience of a built-in vacuum gives collectors the best of both worlds, keeping their models and displays looking factory-fresh with minimal effort.

__Above:__ The product comes with multiple attachments, so you can use the right tool for the job.

__Left:__ BrickTec uses air to deal with dust.

500w
motor inside
bricktec
Super Soft Brushes

bricktec

Electric
Blower & Vacuum

Clean your builds the easy way

Free Shipping

SHOP HERE

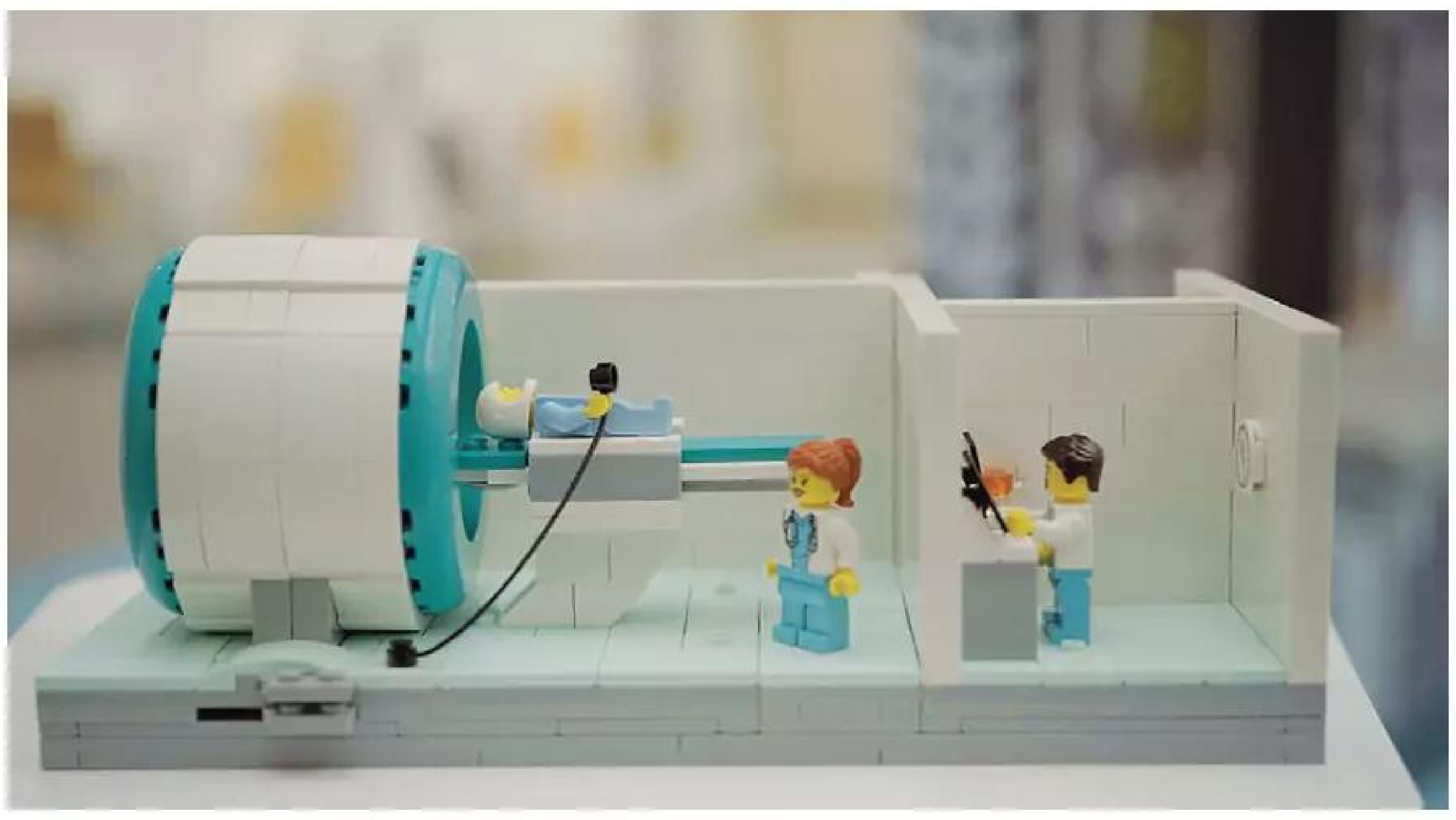
www.itdusters.com/bricktec

10% off Code:
Blocks10

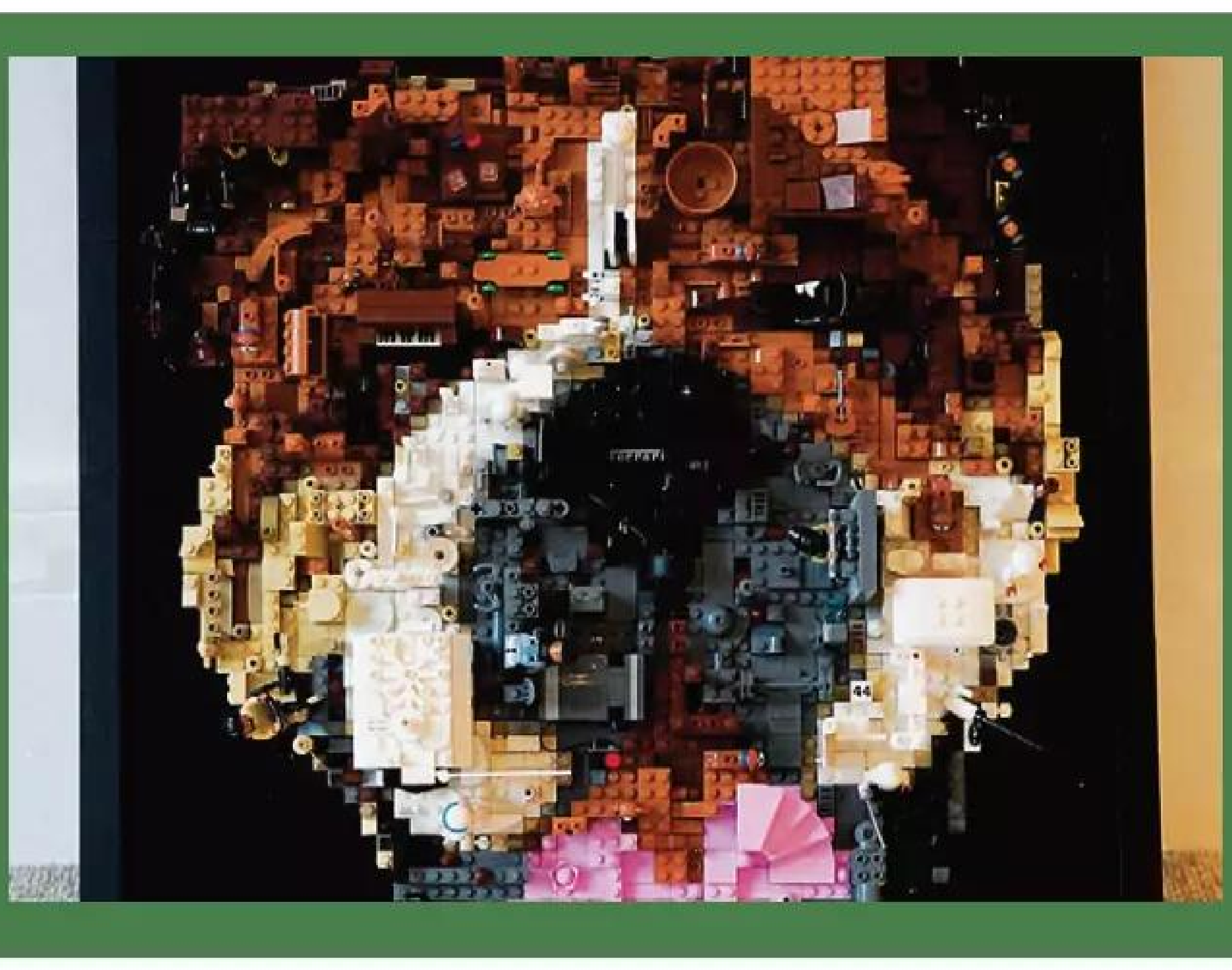
In other news...

Rounding up the rest of the month's news from the world of LEGO bricks

REDUCING MEDICAL ANXIETY



To help alleviate children's anxiety before MRI procedures, the LEGO Group and the LEGO Foundation created an MRI Scanner set. More than 10,000 copies have been donated to hospitals across the world since 2023. The set allows children to visualise what the procedure will look like before they experience it, with 96% of healthcare professionals reporting that the model helps to reduce children's anxiety in LEGO Group commissioned surveys. "I liked playing with the LEGO toy," said Ivy, a four-year-old patient who used the model. "It made me feel relaxed. I didn't like the loud noises in the real machine. But I knew what was happening. I wasn't scared. I was brave."



A BRICK-BUILT TRIBUTE

Ferrari driver Lewis Hamilton recently shared a loving tribute to his late dog, Roscoe, made from LEGO bricks and sent to him by a fan. "This LEGO portrait of Roscoe really touched me," Lewis shared on Instagram. "The amount of detail in it is incredible and I can't imagine how long it took. Thank you to Karen and Ilona for making this and sending it to me." Making clever use of its 3D form, the portrait includes hidden details such as a Formula 1 car, a minifigure in a Ferrari racing outfit and another representing Lewis at the 2024 Met Gala.

PHASING OUT NATURAL

As part of the 'Zero Impact in Operations' goal, the LEGO Group is aiming to phase out the use of natural gases at its production sites. In 2023, natural gas emissions accounted for 16,000 tonnes CO2e — a number the LEGO Group hopes to cut significantly in the next few years. Finding alternative heat sources is the primary way the company is hoping to reduce its reliance on natural gas; its facility in Hungary is undergoing construction to start using geothermal energy, and in Billund, 11 buildings switched over to district heating in 2024, resulting in an emissions reduction of 1,064 tonnes CO2e per year.

BACK TO FICTION

DK, long-time publisher of LEGO reference and idea books, has announced the creation of LEGO Fiction, a new line of books designed to feature stories for young readers all the way up to young adults. "In 2026, DK will publish fiction with the LEGO Group for the first time ever," said DK Managing Director Mark Searle. "We are thrilled to be building LEGO Fiction with our roster of incredibly talented partners, authors and illustrators." The whole scope of this new effort is yet to be announced, with more information on titles likely to be shared closer to LEGO Fiction's debut sometime in 2026.

FACTORY EXPANSION COMPLETE

The LEGO Group's factory in Nyíregyháza, Hungary, has officially completed its two-year expansion project, effectively increasing production capacity by 30% to help meet strong demand for LEGO products in the region. "The site reflects our commitment to sustainability, and through increased manufacturing capacity we will be able to bring more LEGO play to more children and fans in Europe and around the world," said LEGO CEO Niels B Christiansen. The Nyíregyháza factory is now home to more than 1,000 injection moulding machines and 73 packaging lines, plus new warehouse and administrative areas, making it the second largest LEGO factory in the world.

RYAN EVERLETH

Gaming Download

ODYSSEY MERGES WITH EXPEDITIONS

Heroes fall and legends rise as one of the biggest updates shakes the LEGO Fortnite multiverse

Earlier this year, a brand-new style of play was introduced to LEGO Fortnite in the form of Expeditions. It offered players the opportunity to choose a Hero Class and fight the evil minions under the command of Mask Maker Daigo. Now the it has combined with Odyssey in the biggest update to LEGO Fortnite all year, allowing players to become heroes within the original game.

"This merger will focus the team's development efforts on Odyssey and Brick Life," the developers announced, suggesting that the team's attention was spread too thin and that these will be the two core LEGO games going forward.

Expeditions is officially retired and has now merged completely with Odyssey. Dedicated fans who have been training in Expeditions will receive an exclusive Mask Maker Daigo decor bundle.

While it might be the end of an era for Expeditions, almost all of the same gameplay will still apply in Odyssey. Players have a brand-new crafting station in Odyssey to make the Hero Class weapons for Rift Ripper, Shadow Caller and The Hunter. The skill tree progression for these classes has also been transferred and can be found in a specific section of the Journal.

Health has had another revamp too. Previously, the hearts system was replaced with a bar that went up to 400 HP (health points) and was refilled when eating anything, whether foraged snacks or food made at a kitchen station. However, hunger has now been removed so that players can focus on combat instead. Food now offers buffs, whereas health can only be restored with Potions.

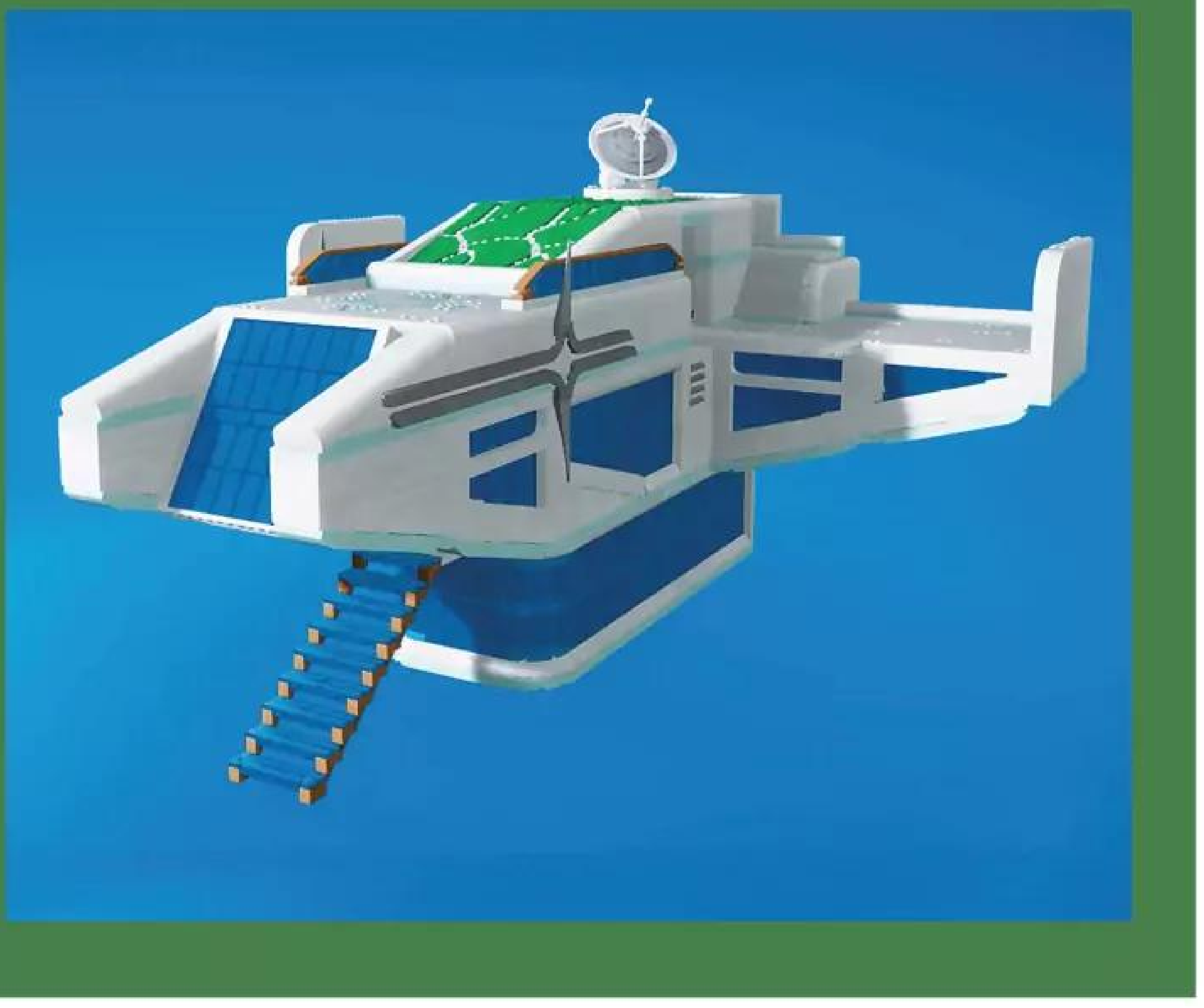
Potions are brewed in the Potions Cauldron, another new station and there's a huge variety to unlock. There is sturdy potion to improve armour during melee combat, a hasty potion that boosts speed and a skilful potion to temporarily increase the damage dealt by tools or weapons. One of the most powerful is the Klom Home Potion, which allows the player to teleport instantly back to their bed.

While all of these changes are significant, the Hero Class combat is not mandatory in Odyssey. Fans can still play as a regular character, although the weapons and abilities are useful when facing the boss battles. To understand all of the changes, new quests have been added for players in the Journal. LEGO Fortnite Odyssey is available to play now on PC and consoles with the latest v37.50 update.

KAT REES-JAUKE

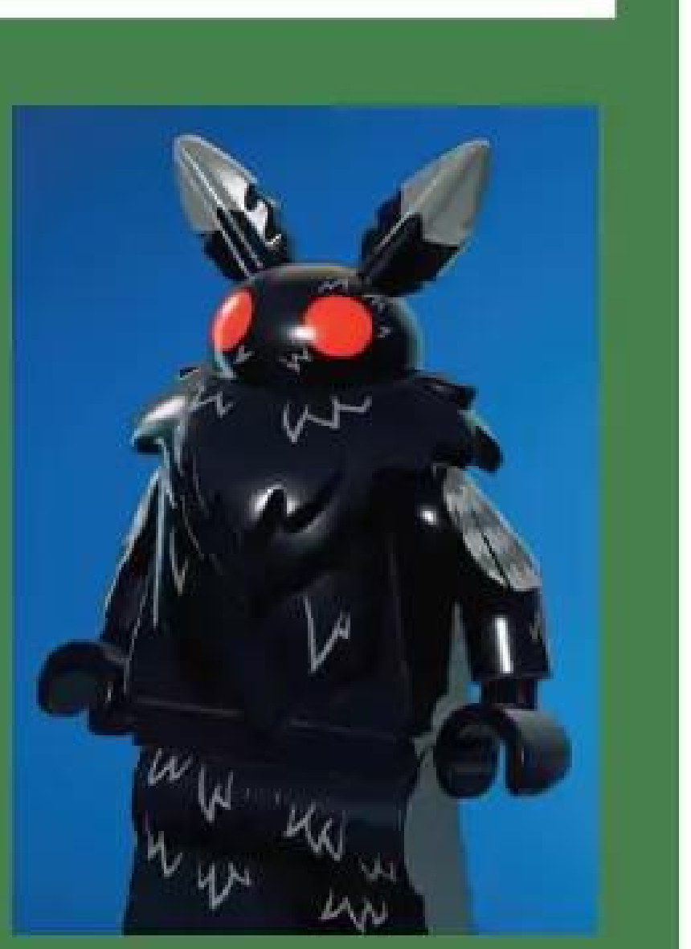
Supernova Academy Research Base

With the addition of Expeditions to the worlds of Odyssey, now is the perfect time to build the futuristic designs of Supernova Academy into a village. The Research Base could be a home, a ship or perhaps a modern art installation. Two literal wings extend from the main hallway and a loading ramp leads inside to a cosy two-storey space. It features a minimalist blue and white colour scheme, with some green solar panels on the roof because apparently even heroes need to watch their carbon footprints. It's a great space to decorate using the new Mask Maker Daigo decor pack.



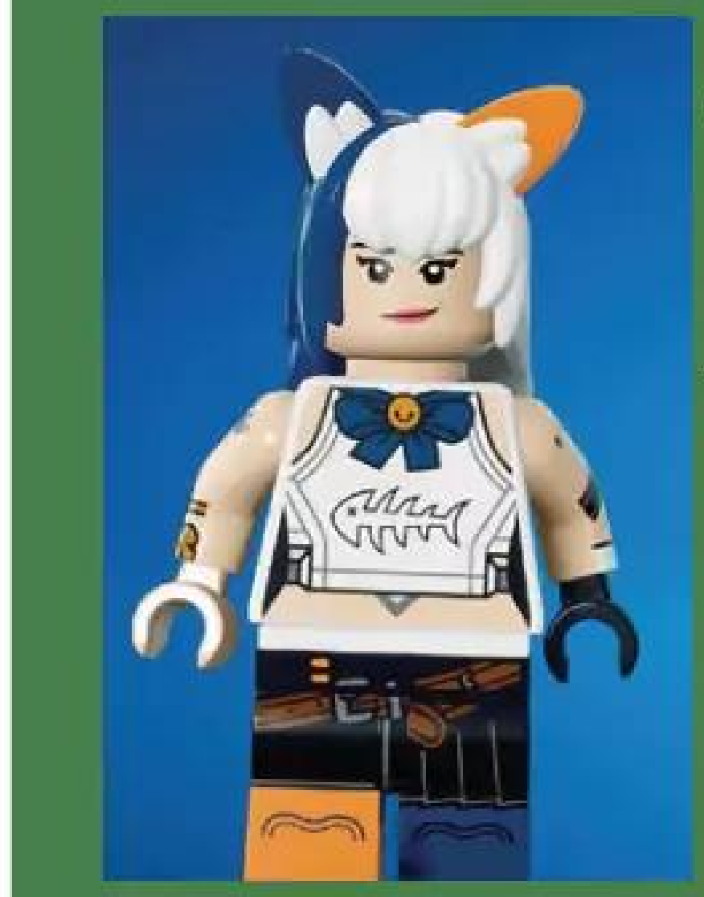
New Fortnite characters

The Mothman



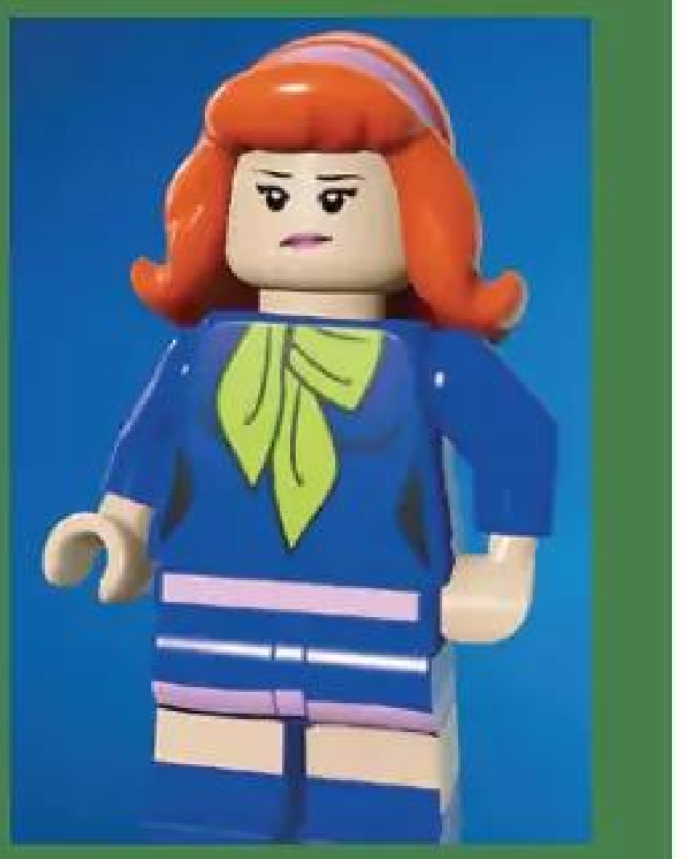
The man, the moth, the legend. One of the most famous monsters of all time has a fuzzy collar of fur surrounding his neck and wing decoration across each arm. Glowing red eyes should make Mothman scary, but he's far too fluffy to be anything other than cute.

Meg



Embracing all things feline, this is the perfect choice for cat lovers. Meg wears a fish bone t-shirt and a choker necklace complete with bow. She's anthropomorphic and appears part tortoiseshell, with differently coloured ears and a spotted tail. A paw print tattoo on her shoulder completes the look.

Daphne Blake



Jeepers! All of the Mystery Machine crew have been added, presumably to help solve intriguing phenomenon. Daphne stands out in her signature purple. She looks exactly like her real-life minifigure, featuring her lime green scarf, purple boots and the lilac headband as part of Daphne's elegant hairstyle.

Fortnite phraseology

POTIONS

Drinks have been replaced by Potions and they offer a range of different benefits. They are crafted at a Potions Cauldron and each requires specific ingredients to make. Basic potions offer temporary effects or boosts, while the rarer ones have greater benefits.

Potions are now essential to restoring health – the Jumbo Health Potion restores 450 HP. Others can improve the durability or strength of tools when exploring the world, while some are specifically designed for use during combat. There are even biome specific potions like the Storm Fruit Potion that allow players to refill the Storm timer when in the area.

Top 10

Green sets

As Wicked: For Good delights audiences, Blocks looks at sets that make others green with envy

10. 76403 The Ministry of Magic

The cavernous size of the administrative and political hub of the British Wizarding World makes it a tricky subject for a LEGO set, but 76403 The Ministry of Magic does a solid job with 990 pieces. The two modular towers use earth green pieces that give a sense of opulence and provide a strong frame for the red and white windows. Many key rooms are included, such as Dolores Umbridge's and Arthur Weasley's offices, the Hall of Prophecy and the court room, but this location needs the Collectors' Edition treatment.

9. 9498 Saesee Tiin's Jedi Starfighter

Jedi Starfighters have been a key part of LEGO Star Wars since the release of 7143 Jedi Starfighter in 2002. Between 2008 and 2013, when The Clone Wars was airing each week, starfighters were released for a number of Jedi characters, including 9498 Saesee Tiin's Jedi Starfighter. The dark green pieces contrast nicely against the white wings and gold accents. The green theme doesn't stop there – R3-D5 is similarly coloured, then Saesee Tiin and Even Piell both have green lightsabers. If you're a fan of both Star Wars and green, this is the model for you.

8. 79003 An Unexpected Gathering

Hobbit holes prioritise comfort and 79003 An Unexpected Gathering makes Bag End look particularly inviting. Bright and regular green bricks dutifully recreate the rolling hills of the Shire with a variety of slope pieces that create interesting angles. The cosy interior includes an inviting kitchen space for Thorin's company to descend on Bilbo, where they can test the hobbit's hospitality. 10354 The Lord of the Rings: The Shire is bigger and uses modern build techniques, but for its size 79003 mostly achieves in 652 pieces the same effect as 10354 does using 2,017.

7. 70805 Trash Chomper

70805 Trash Chomper works so well because the creative concept is perfectly tied to the civilian vehicle. Rubbish trucks are intimidating, with their hydraulic presses that crush anything thrown into the back, so the idea of a chomping rubbish truck with sharp teeth is perfect. 70805 offers a decent municipal vehicle, using dark green pieces for the traditional look. The silver and grey accents, two rubbish bins for thrusters and actual biting feature on the creative build come together to deliver a quirky machine that's hungry to fight evil.

6. 41188 Breakout from the Goblin King's Fortress

41188 Breakout from the Goblin King's Fortress is a prime example of how fantasy castles need a distinct identity to shine. There's lots to play with, including a tower, battlements, working drawbridge and numerous carnivorous plants. The model uses a variety of green colours, with contrasting yellowish green and sand green elements that make up most of the castle. Transparent bright green pieces add a magical touch, especially to the drawbridge chains. Although a mid-size model, there's plenty to enjoy as the set balances the menacing with the endearing.

5. 10194 Emerald Night

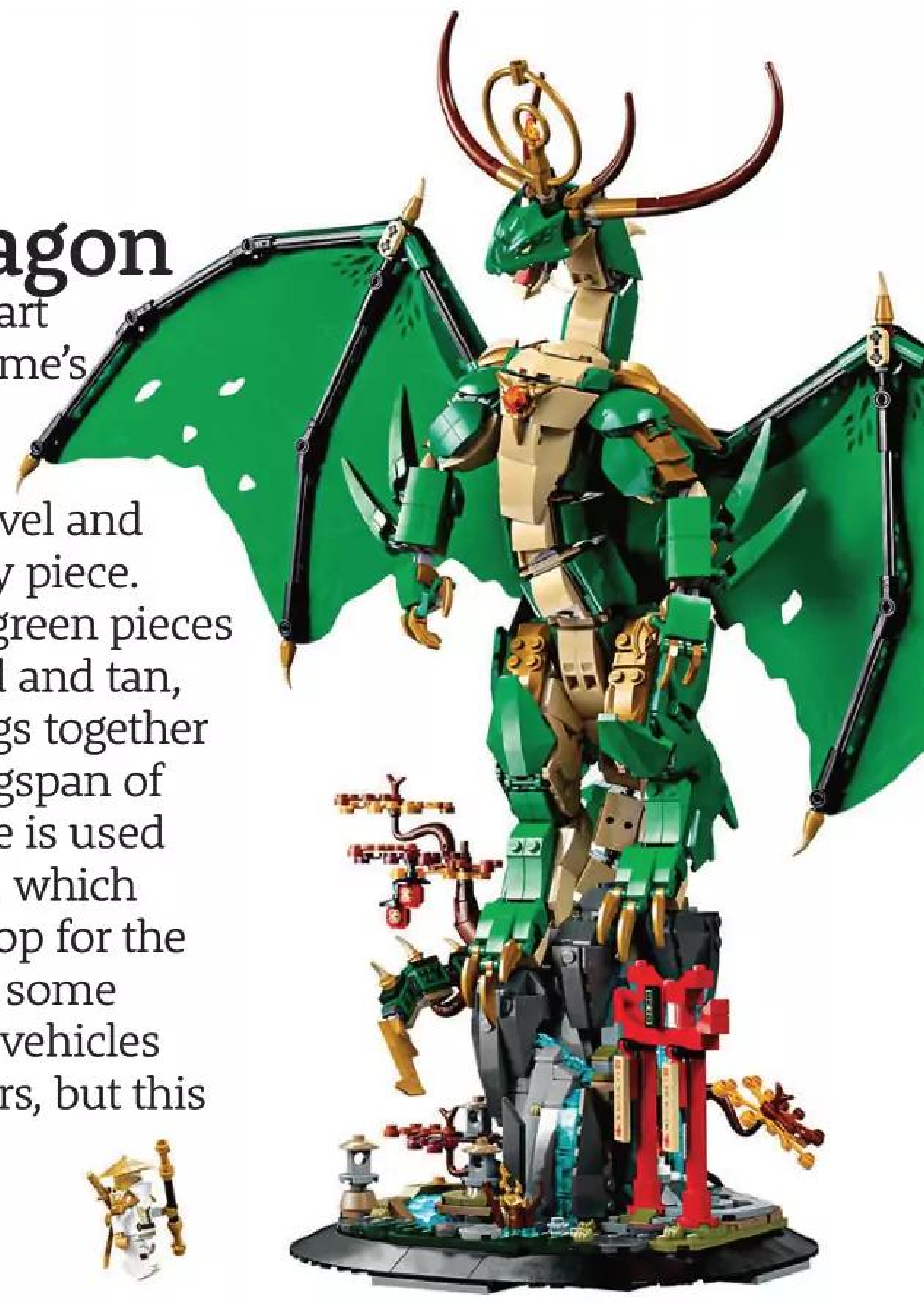
10194 Emerald Night is based on the Flying Scotsman, the first train to reach 100mph in 1934, although it is not a precise adaptation. The set was the first to use large drive wheels. The name gives away the colour scheme, a handsome dark green and black for the locomotive and tender that contrasts nicely against the lighter tan and brown passenger car. It is a very attractive model – the engine is completely brick built and the whole model uses several SNOT techniques – and it is rightly beloved by the LEGO community.

4. 75684 Welcome to Emerald City

The Emerald City is the capital city of the Land of Oz and is at the end of the yellow brick road. Every shade of green that is in the LEGO catalogue is used in 75684 Welcome to Emerald City, which, with the added gold accents, gives a true sense of opulence and glamour to the model. The central tower is flanked by a few shops, whilst the strong mini-doll cast means that you can recreate many key scenes from Wicked and Wicked: For Good. There is more than one small day's worth of play here.

3. 71847 The Guardian Dragon

Dragons have been a part of NINJAGO since the theme's inception, but 71847 The Guardian Dragon takes the concept to the next level and delivers a majestic display piece. Bright green and regular green pieces are accentuated with gold and tan, whilst the new cloth wings together create an impressive wingspan of 53cm. A darker green tone is used on Daidan's back and tail, which provides the ideal backdrop for the tan spikes. Lloyd has had some impressive green mechs, vehicles and dragons over the years, but this is in a league of its own.



COFFEE UNCHAINED

2. 21276 The Creeper

Creepers are one of the most recognisable mob creatures to plague Minecraft players and appropriately they have been included in LEGO models since the theme launched in 2012. 21276 The Creeper is a special example of how the mob has been presented. Standing over 21cm tall, the model is almost like a mosaic, using light green, dark green and green plates. Simple hinges mean the legs move just like in the game, and a few black plates finish the pixelated face. This is the ideal brick-built homage to a famous videogame adversary.

1. 70840 Welcome to Apocalypseburg!

When the Statue of Liberty was installed in 1886 it was a shiny brown, but the oxidation of its copper skin meant that three decades later it had turned green. The Statue has been the focus of various LEGO products, but 70840 Welcome to Apocalypseburg! uses it as the centrepiece for an epic playset. The scale and angle of the set are impressive, with sand green used to great effect throughout. The statue's face is surprisingly expressive – sausage elements make great eyebrows – and the torch's shaping is superb. Even after the apocalypse, there is time for solid LEGO builds.

ANTHONY WALKER-COOK

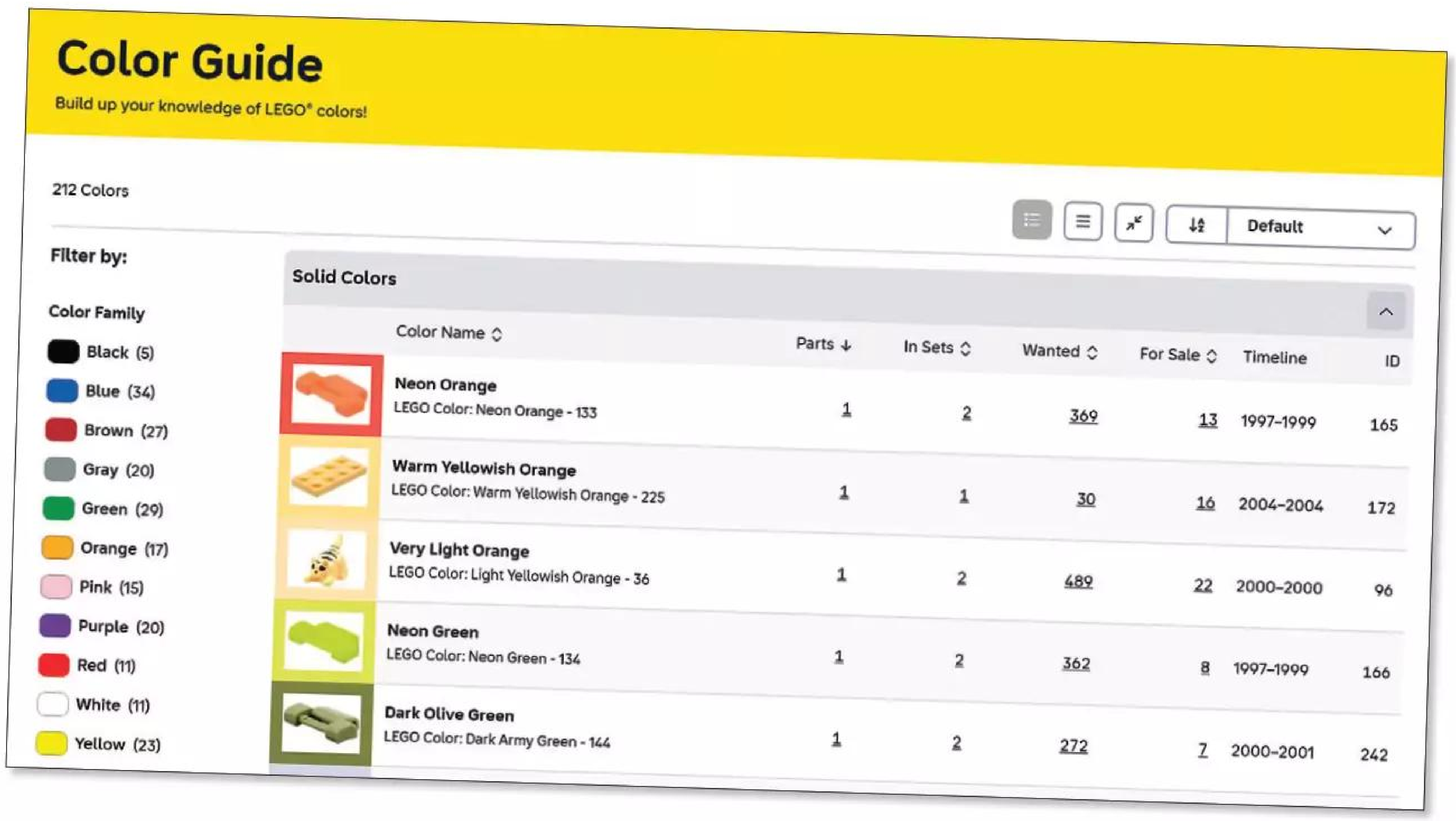
What's new at bricklink

What is BDP?

BrickLink Designer Program is a way for fans to turn their builds into official LEGO sets. Each year, 15 fan-designed models will be available to pre-order as part of a very limited production run. Sets are limited to 30,000 copies per design.

BRICKLINK PAINTS A NEW COLOUR GUIDE

Updates to the colour guide intend to make finding the exact hues that you need easier



Color Guide

Build up your knowledge of LEGO® colors!

212 Colors

Default

Filter by:

Color Family

- ⬛ Black (5)
- 🟦 Blue (34)
- 🟥 Brown (27)
- ⬜ Gray (20)
- 🟩 Green (29)
- 🟧 Orange (17)
- ⬜ Pink (15)
- 🟪 Purple (20)
- 🟥 Red (11)
- ⬜ White (11)
- 🟨 Yellow (23)

Solid Colors

Color Name	Parts	In Sets	Wanted	For Sale	Timeline	ID
Neon Orange LEGO Color: Neon Orange - 133	1	2	369	13	1997–1999	165
Warm Yellowish Orange LEGO Color: Warm Yellowish Orange - 225	1	1	30	16	2004–2004	172
Very Light Orange LEGO Color: Light Yellowish Orange - 36	1	2	489	22	2000–2000	96
Neon Green LEGO Color: Neon Green - 134	1	2	362	8	1997–1999	166
Dark Olive Green LEGO Color: Dark Army Green - 144	1	2	272	7	2000–2001	242

As part of the many different BrickLink databases, there has been a comprehensive guide to all of the colours recognised within LEGO sets. This guide has always included the specific BrickLink names for these colours, which are also the names used in Studio software.

While it works as a helpful tool for users of the programme, it does feature discrepancies from the official LEGO colour guide. It has recently undergone a major update to make the interface more user friendly and add new features. The intention is to help builders find the exact piece they need for a creation, understand the different colours available and figure out exactly what shades they need.

One of the biggest changes is that the official LEGO colour names have now been added alongside the names used by BrickLink. These names are always slightly different – BrickLink's salmon is called Medium Red 101 in LEGO parlance, while lime green is Bright Yellowish Green 119.

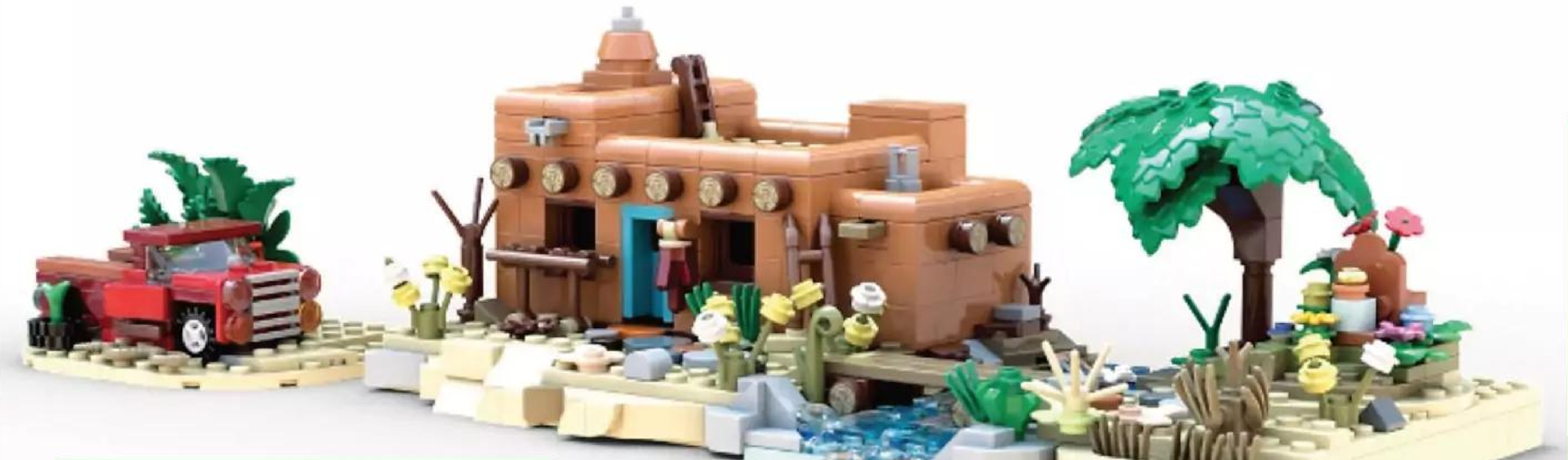
It should make it easier to translate parts lists and find specific pieces if you prefer to use the official LEGO names and colour codes. They are displayed next to photos of real LEGO elements in that colour, as well as a digital colour swatch.

A new filter lets users choose which colour family they want to look at, which makes sifting through the different colour options less time consuming. Rather than looking at the entire list of options, you can simply pick all of the shades you're interested in or type in the colour name if you know it already. The keyword search feature works with both the official LEGO colour names and the BrickLink ones. You can also use keywords to search for special colours, including glitter, pearl and transparent.

There are then further filter options, including browsing colours by the years they were produced or looking at those that are currently in active production. That should help users identify parts from retro sets. It will also be handy for builders who are making creations to submit to Ideas – one of the key criteria is that fans should use colours that are available and incorporate as few recolours as possible.

While it's a big upgrade to the previous colour guide, the changes aren't yet fully complete. There are still some bug fixes being addressed, so at the time of writing the filter options are lost when you return to a previous page. The BrickLink technical team is working to get that fixed so filter searches are saved.

KAT REES-JAUKE



Build spotlight

cma208 has created a beautiful rendition of traditional New Mexico architecture inspired by a recent visit to Sante Fe and Toas Pueblo. It captures the warm tones and rounded corners of an adobe brick home, with a brightly coloured turquoise door. There is some sporadic vegetation and cacti to suggest the arid climate alongside the rusting vehicle.

Important dates

February 1, 2026
Series 7 opens for preorder

June 2026
Series 8 opens for preorder

July 2026
Series 7 starts shipping

October 2026
Series 9 opens for preorder

November 2026
Series 8 starts shipping

Better than gold?

Matt Chiles shares his wisdom from the block market floor, cutting through the many myths around investing in and reselling LEGO sets

There are many ways to earn money in the LEGO hobby. As this column is about LEGO investing, I often focus on general investing principles and on buying, holding and selling new LEGO sets. Recently I looked into a different selling business while at a LEGO fan convention. I spoke to one of the vendors about his business strategy and I learned quite a bit about making money by selling at conventions.

Jared Gella has been buying and selling LEGO for a number of years – and does a good portion of his selling at LEGO conventions. As a vendor, he has sold at dozens of LEGO conventions across the United States.

When selling at conventions, Jared often brings his wife. They fly to the convention city, so they need to be choosey about what they bring due to luggage limitations. Local sellers have an advantage in that they can easily truck in large amounts of product.

He has found that it is good to bring a wide range of budget friendly things to sell, because it is impossible to know for sure what will sell and so that he has items that will appeal to different market segments. He brings both new and used LEGO sets, as well as minifigures, parts and other related items.

It is important when selling at a venue like a convention to create somewhat of a frenzy at your table. When people are there browsing, it attracts more people. If you have lots of things priced for the family budget, not just for the collector, people will stop and look.

A good way to gauge potential convention sales is to look at the number of people in the room. At a good convention, Jared estimates he will make an average of about $1 per head. Thus, selling at a venue with lots of visitors coming through is a good thing. However, that number is impacted by the quantity of other vendors at the convention. Jared has had very successful sales at venues without many visitors as long as there are fewer other vendors. Conversely, there have been venues with lots of attendees, but also too many vendors – there are only so many spending dollars available!

The venue must also be appropriately sized for the event. If an event is held in a venue that is too large, sales are weak because the event doesn't seem full and successful. When the venue feels full of people, a buying frenzy happens, which is good for sales. Conversely, in an overly crowded venue, patrons skip the vendor area because it's too hard to get around, resulting in weak sales. Make sure the event where you are planning to sell has a good estimate of attendees for the space and that they can limit crowds if necessary.

How do you start selling at a convention? That can be tricky. Good conventions that have been around for a while are choosy about their vendors. It's important to apply early and try to have something that will set you apart from other vendors. Start with a smaller or newer event to get a track record of convention selling. If you don't have that experience you may not be selected to sell at an event, even if they have the space.

Cost is something to investigate of course. Jared spends around $4,000 per convention. That covers registration fees, airline tickets, rental cars, food and hotels. It is not an insignificant cost, but with potentially tens of thousands of visitors coming through it may well be worth it. Before you commit, think of the cost of the inventory you will bring. Is your margin good enough to cover expenses? Can you compete with local vendors with large local inventories? Or should you instead be selling through other mechanisms that better suit you?

I was a convention vendor myself almost 20 years ago. A lot has changed in the hobby since then. There are many more opportunities as a convention vendor than there used to be. LEGO sets have become much more popular and the public has accepted the idea of buying used sets. The minifigure market has exploded, as has the market for add-on accessories like custom tiles and parts. Additionally, a huge market for art products has developed – from traditional t-shirts to jewellery, photography, graphic arts and more.

As Jared has found, conventions can be a great way to get your product in front of a lot of eyes and to quickly sell a lot for a good price. Plus, you get the added benefit of hanging out with the other LEGO fans at the same time! Next August, Jared is even starting a new convention local for him in Santa Clara, California, called Brick Blast Live. Check it out if you are in the Bay Area.

Even if you don't sell, make the time to build something to display at your next local LEGO convention!

MATT CHILES

Toneil Bricks sells at conventions in the UK.

The information in this column about plastic bricks is not intended to constitute – and should not be construed as – investment advice.

USS Enterprise D

Take command of the Starship Enterprise with Captain Jean-Luc Picard by building this miniature version of the iconic vessel. Gather the parts and embark on a voyage of discovery

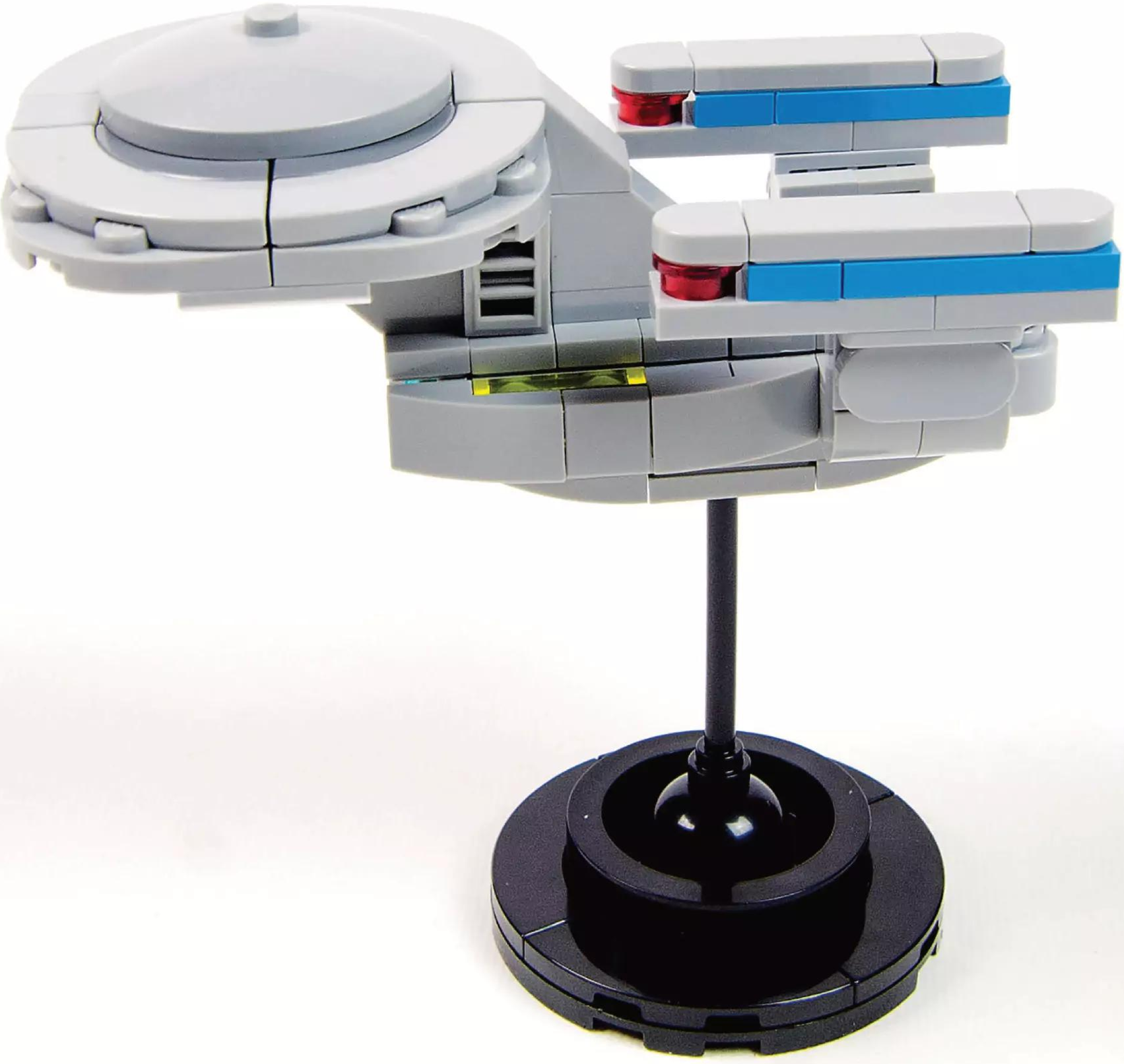
Boldy go with the miniature USS Enterprise D, which is inspired by 10356 Star Trek Enterprise. The iconic ship, from Star Trek: The Next Generation, represents the height of Federation design. Its smooth lines and graceful profile contrast sharply with the more angular ships of earlier eras, yet it still pays clear homage to its predecessors through the familiar saucer-and-nacelle configuration. This blend of continuity and evolution made the Enterprise D instantly recognisable and cemented its place as a science fiction classic.

Capturing the ship's most distinctive feature, the oval-shaped saucer, is the defining challenge of this small model. Unlike the circular disks of earlier Enterprises, the D's elongated oval requires the model to be constructed at an odd number of studs in width. A single row of studs goes between opposing pairs of curved wedge elements to create the subtle elongation that defines the disk's look.

The nacelles are also important. They rely on azure blue elements to emulate the glowing engines. Balancing those colours against the ship's light grey hull brings the model to life and gives it an unmistakable Star Trek presence despite its small size.

Star Trek: The Next Generation offers a wealth of material for further desk sized builds. Compact recreations of the bridge, Ten Forward or the transporter room would make excellent display pieces. Individual starships such as the Klingon Bird of Prey, Romulan Warbird or Ferengi Marauder could form an entire fleet of small-scale spacecraft.

DANIEL KONSTANSKI



Get the parts list: blocksmag.com/goto/enterprise

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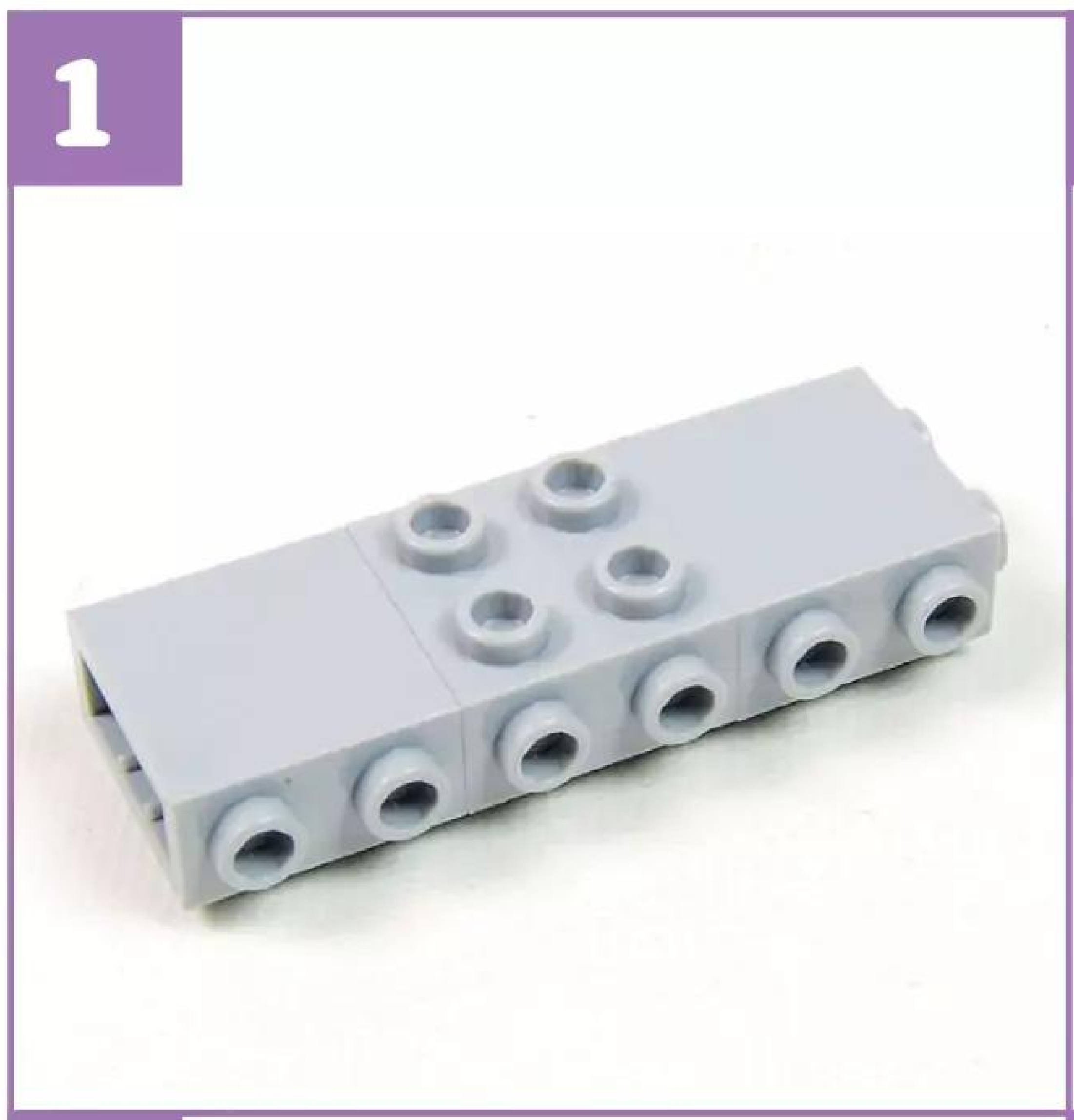

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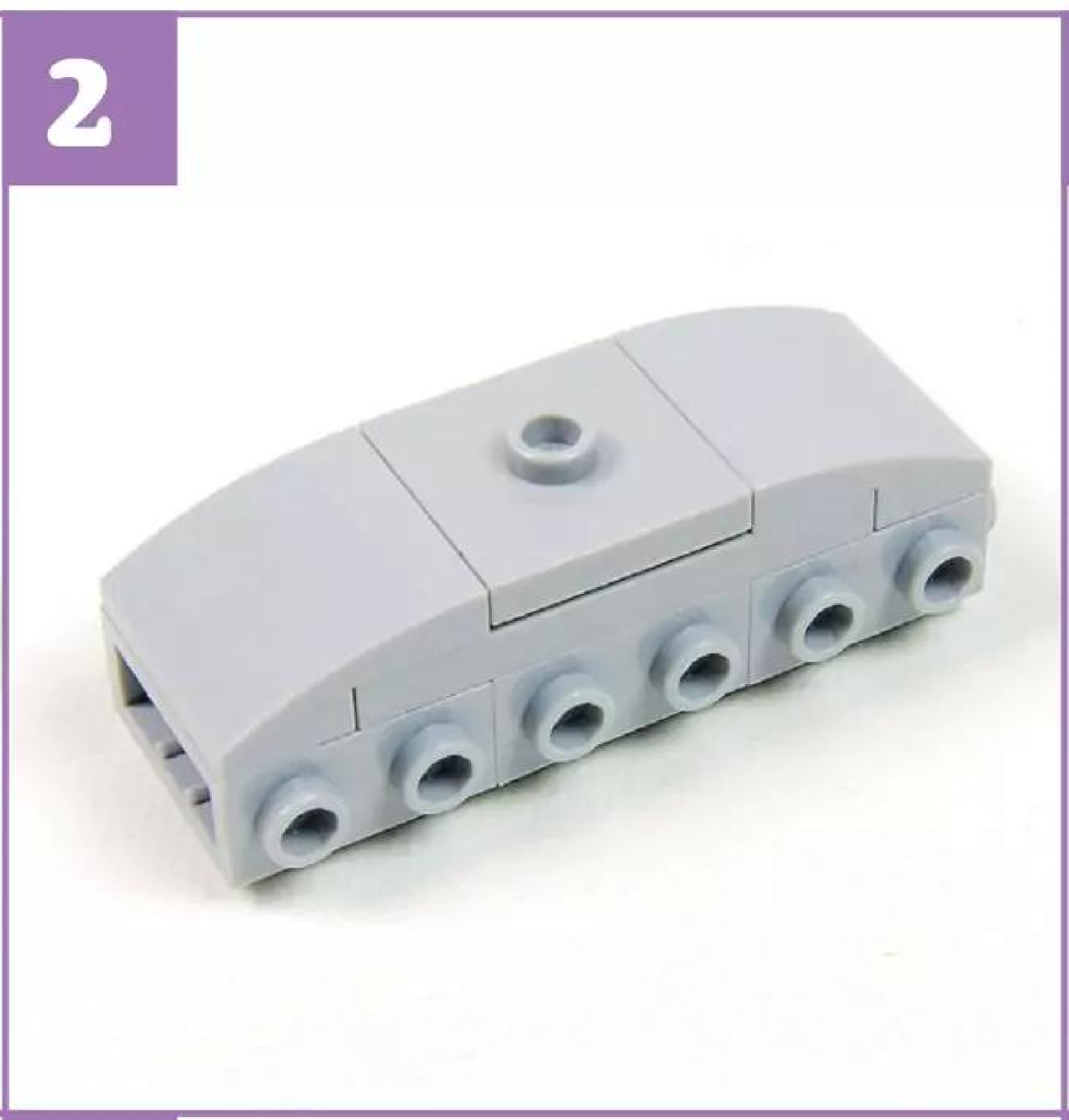

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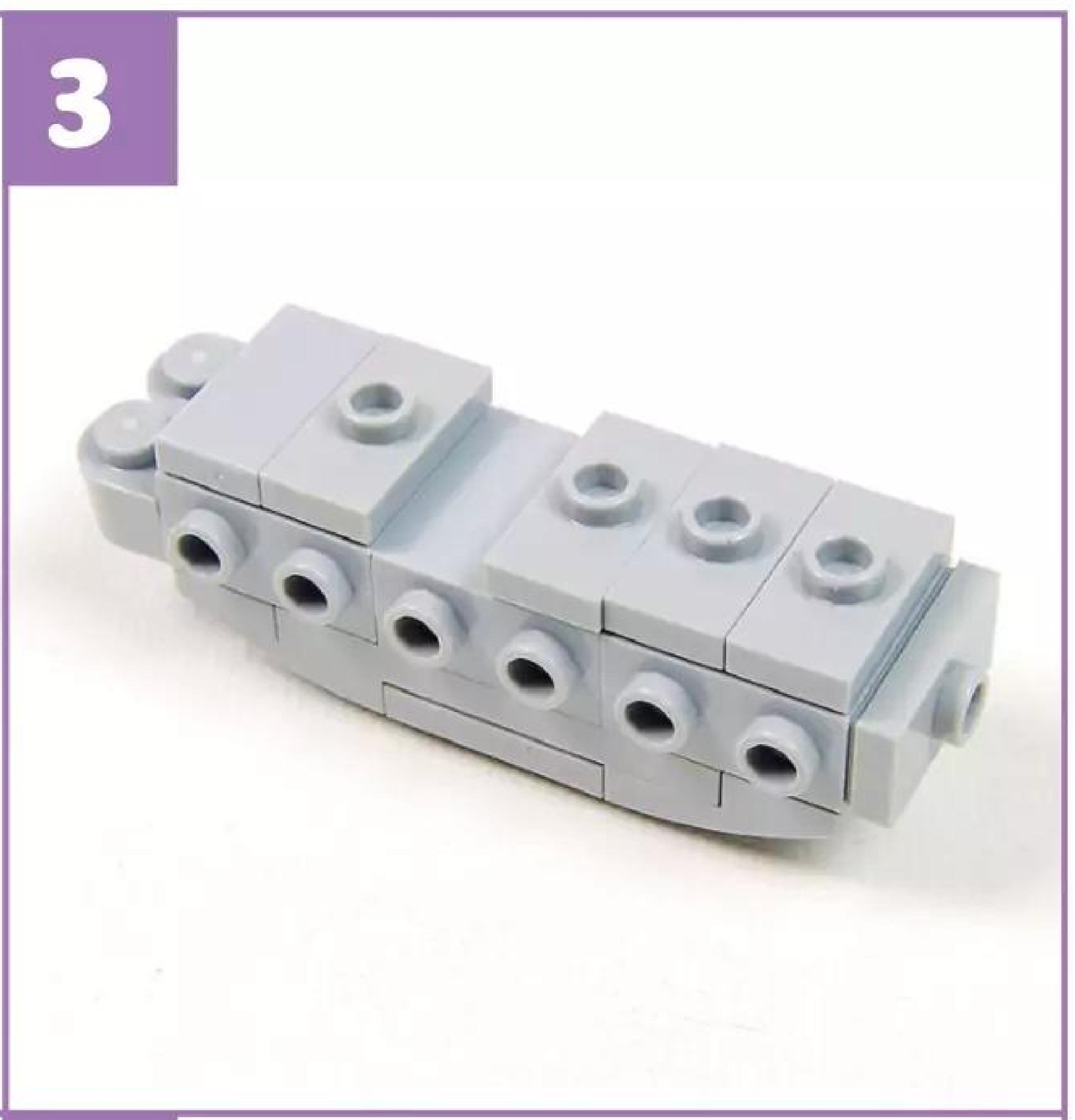

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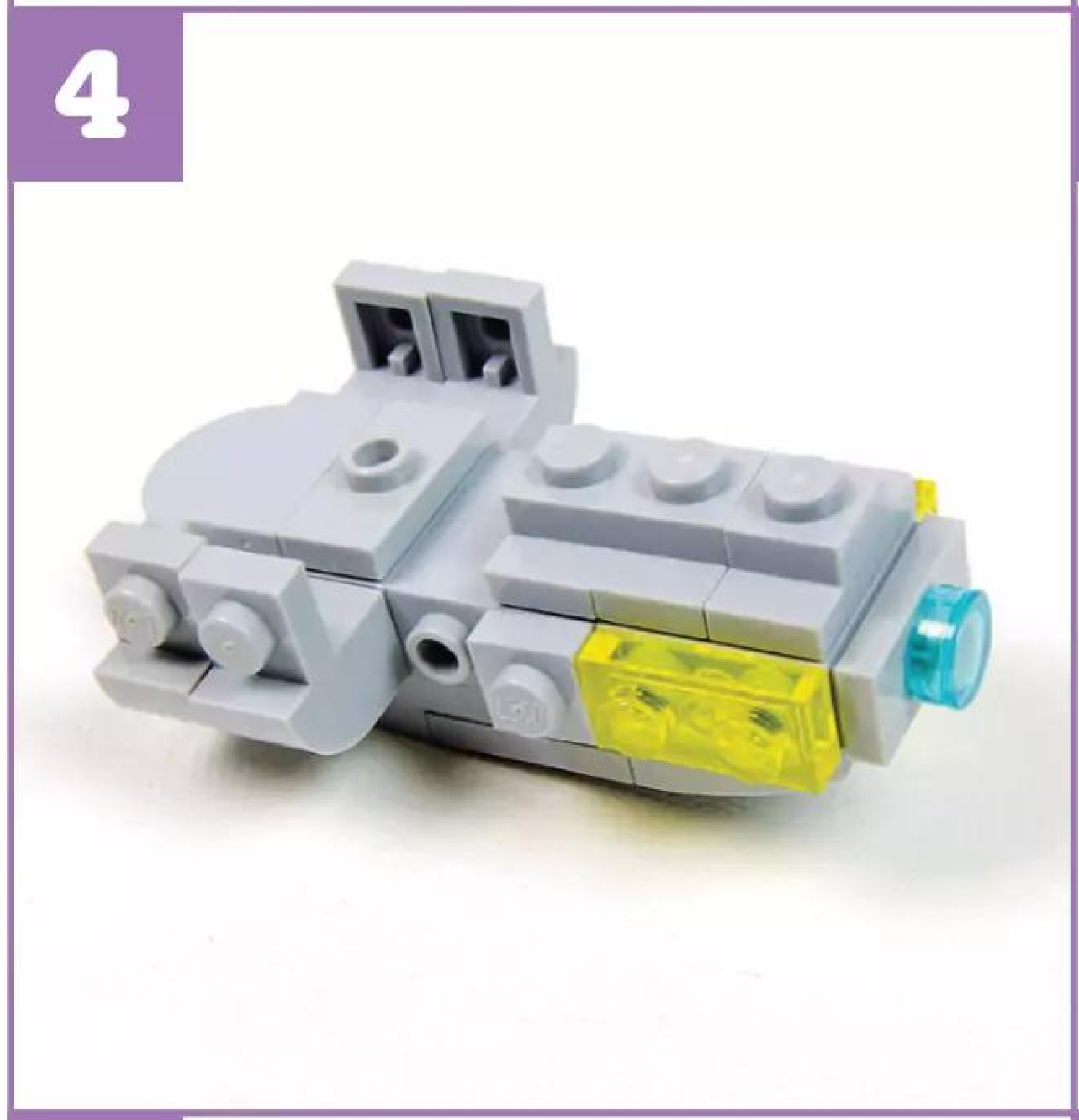

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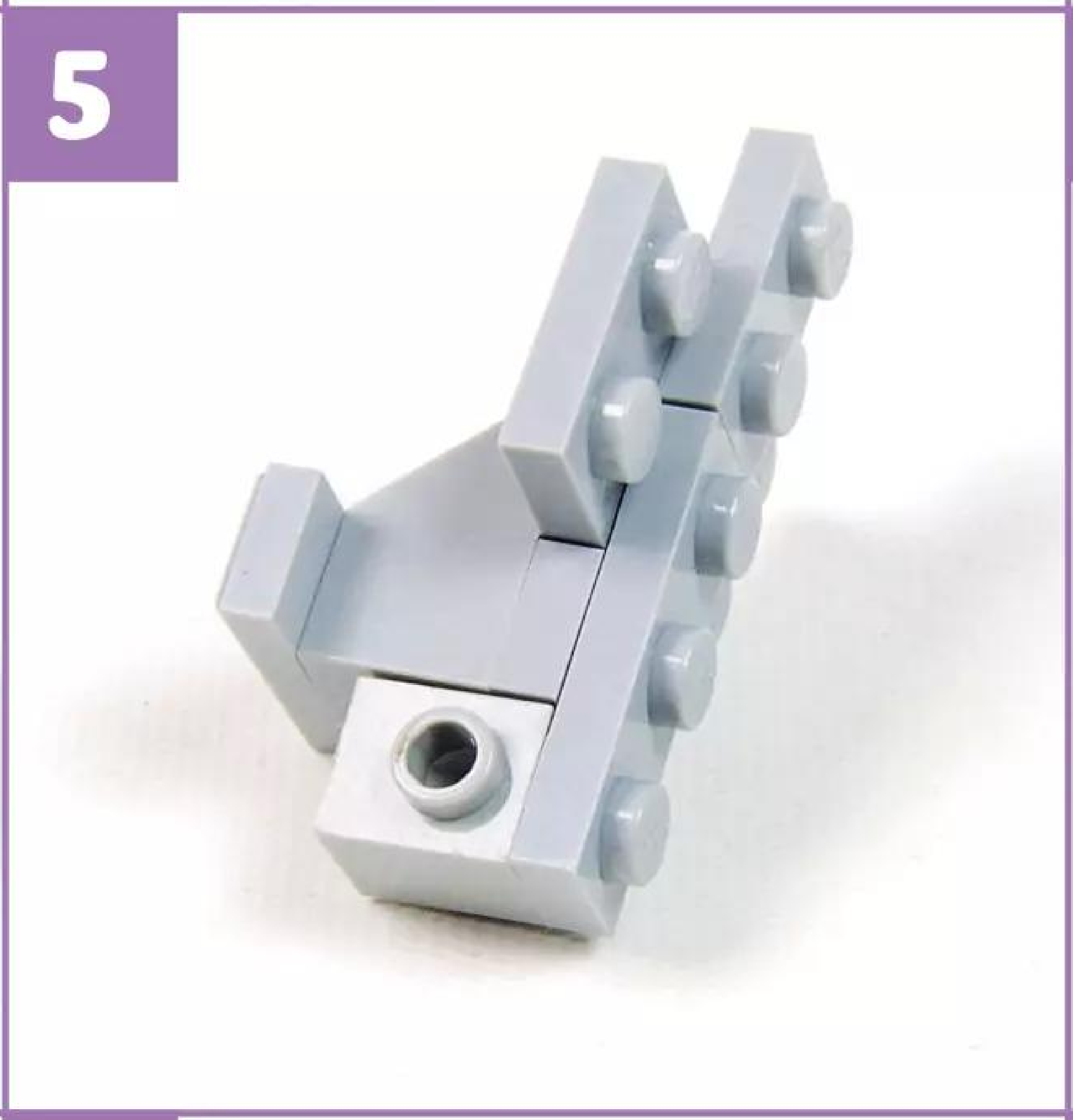

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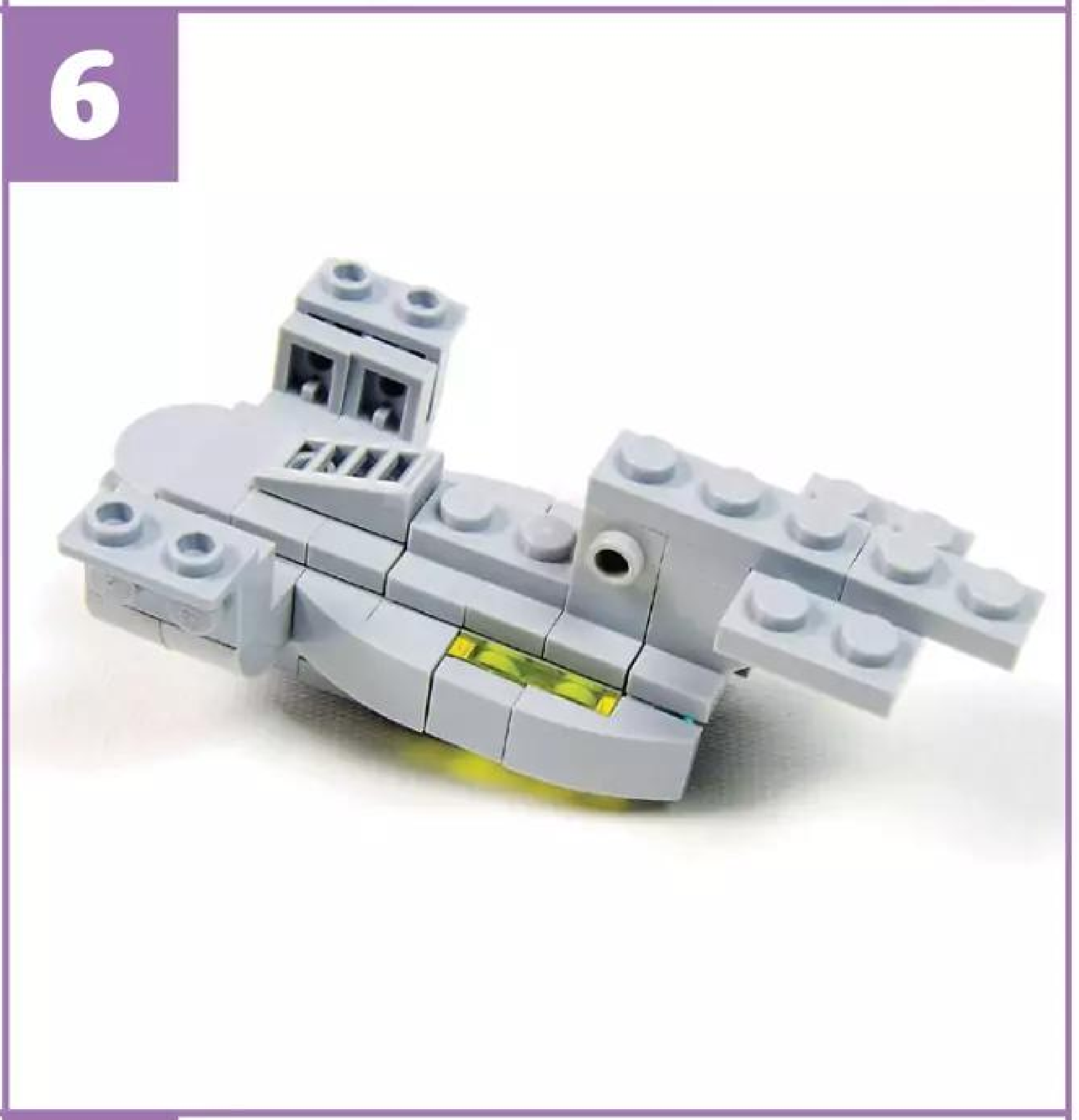

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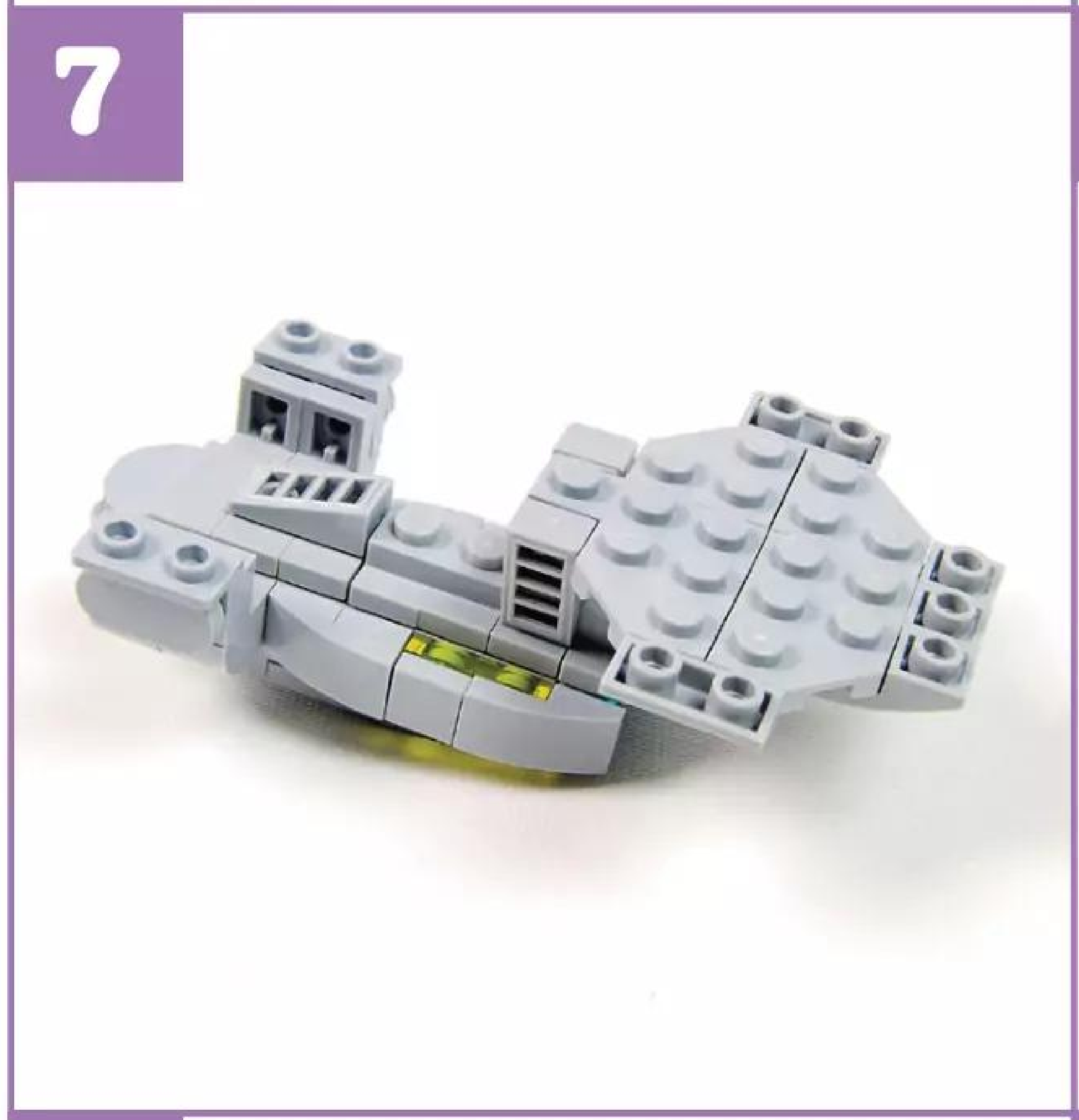

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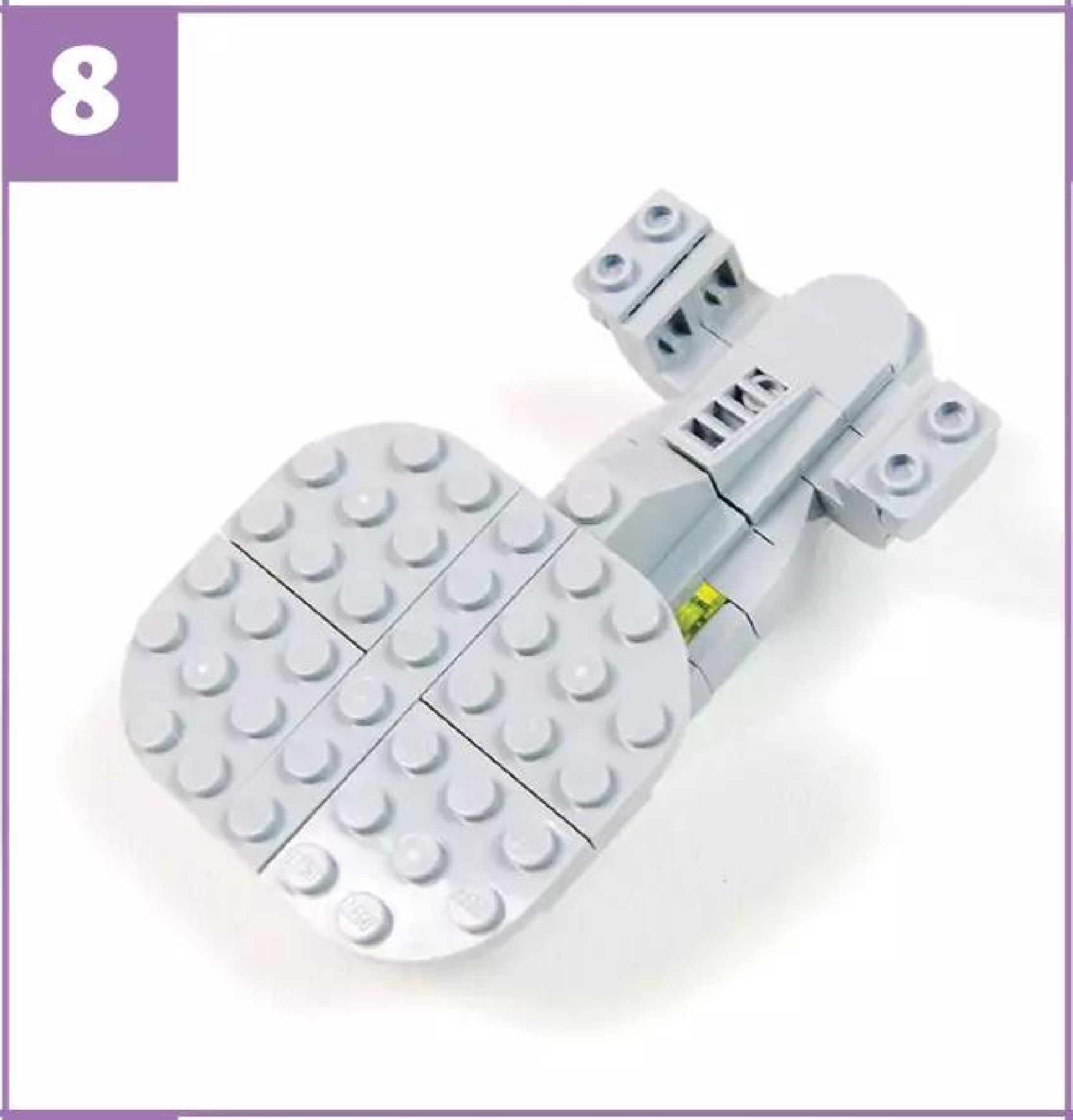

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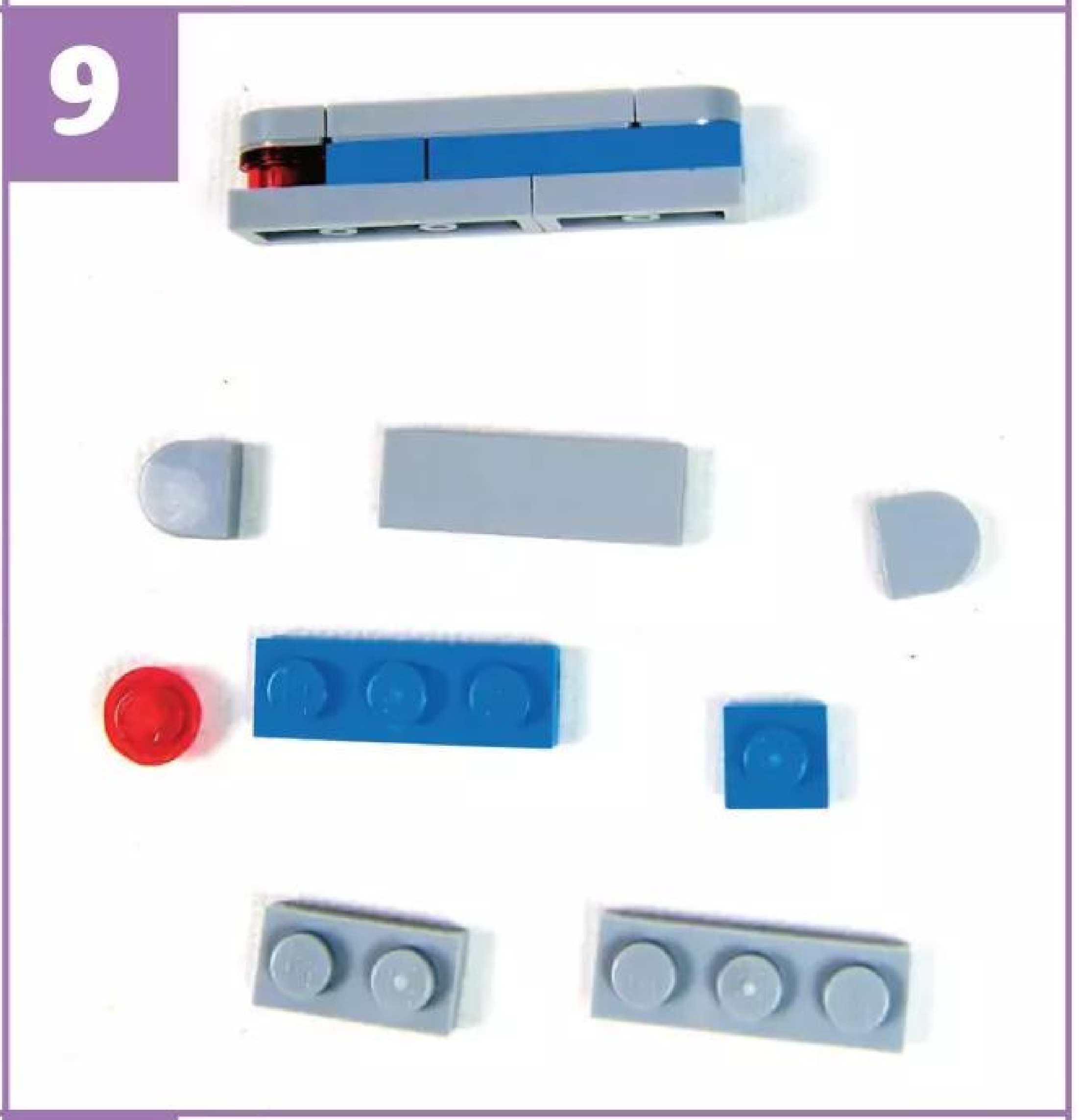

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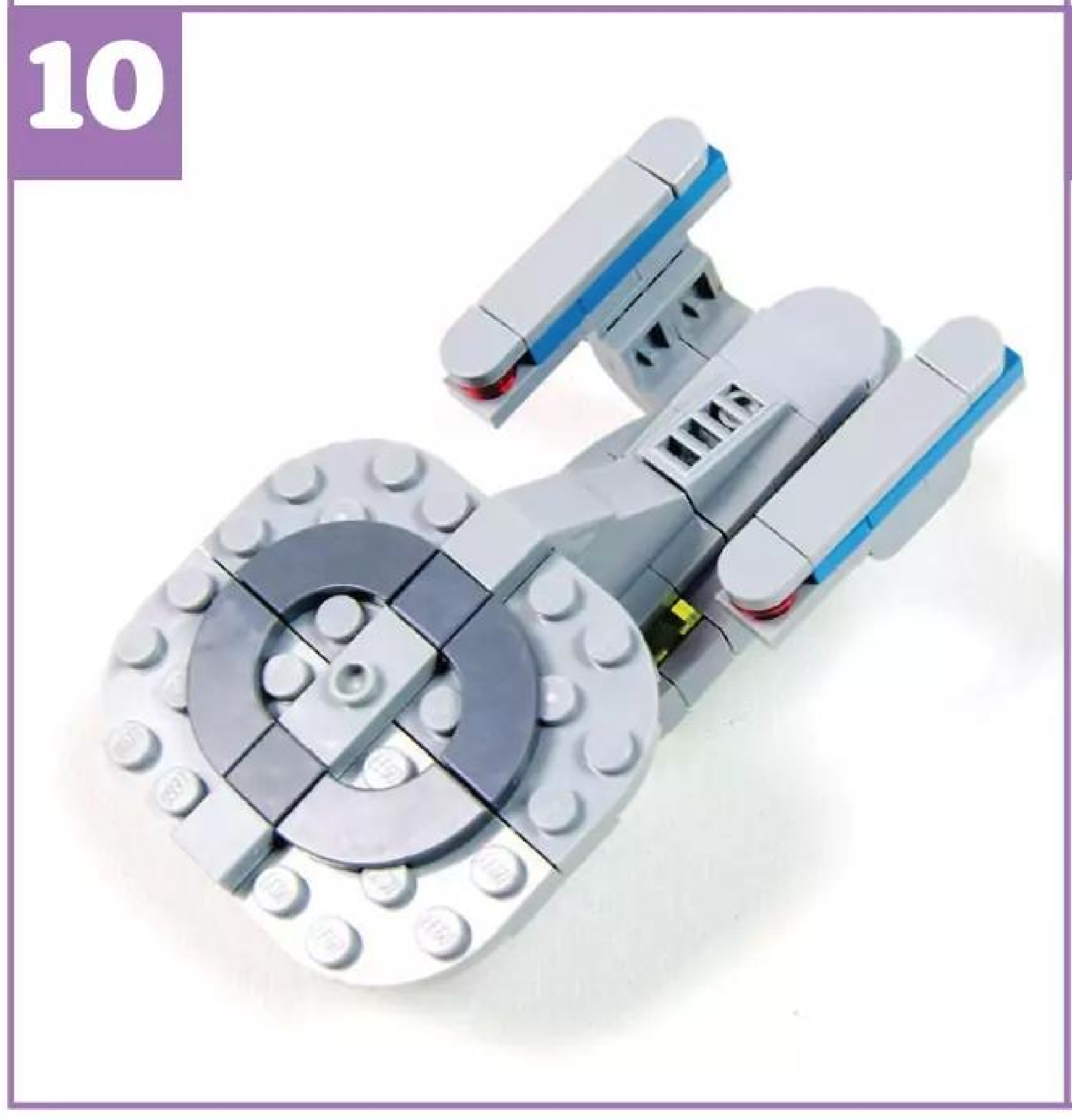

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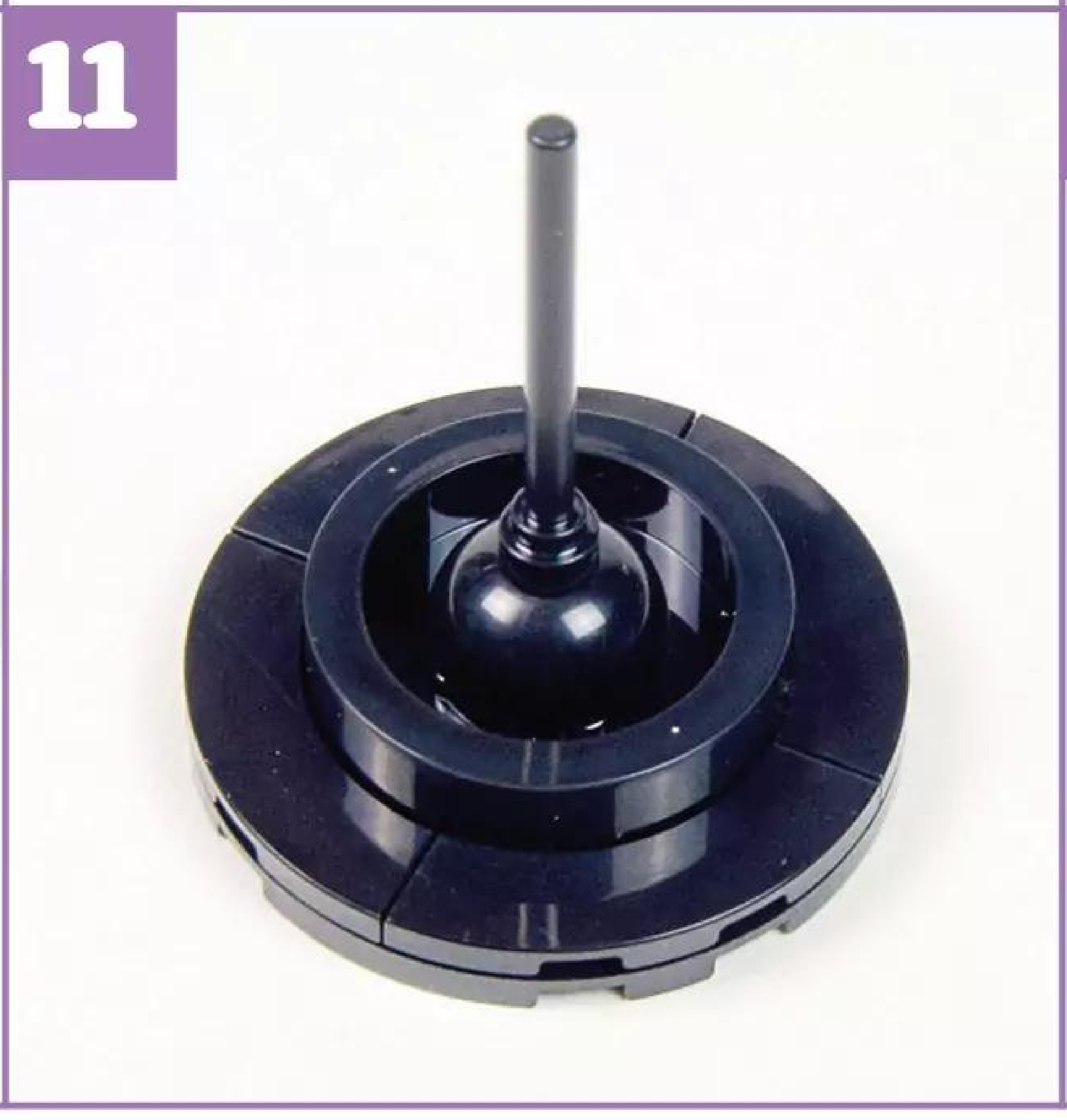

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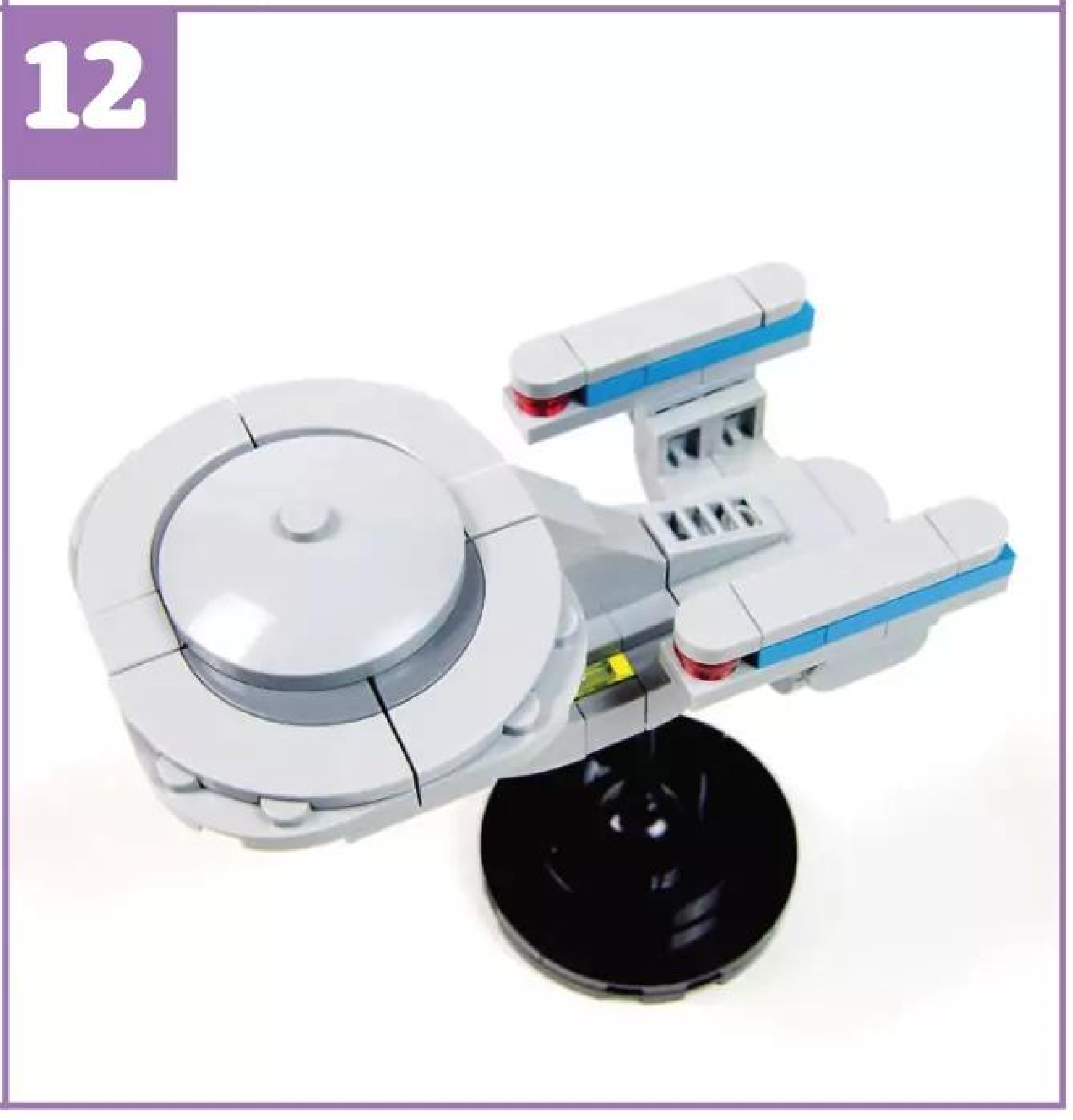


TO BOLDLY GO WHERE NO BRICK HAS GONE BEFORE

The captain and commander of the LEGO Enterprise reveal how they crafted the ultimate rendition of the iconic ship from Star Trek: The Next Generation, a passion project for the duo who never imagined that they would be able to make it so

Words: *Graham E. Hancock*

In 1999, the LEGO Group started a partnership with an epic sci-fi saga that has dominated the cinematic landscape for decades. It was the first collaboration between the LEGO Group and a film franchise – it sparked a steady growth in that part of the Danish company's business, leading to branded sets inspired by Harry Potter, The Lord of the Rings, DC, Marvel and more.

While having a steady stream of Star Wars sets was great for fans of a galaxy far, far away, it seemingly meant that devotees of Gene Roddenberry's universe were out of luck. For many years, the LEGO Group limited licensed sets to a selection of themes and no-one could see a way that the red and white logo would be on two collections of ‘Star –‘ boxes.

Even Senior Model Designer Hans Burkhard Schlömer couldn't see Star Trek coming to pass. "To be honest, I never thought we would be doing this," he says. "Like never ever."

The landscape has changed though. The LEGO Group has grown and grown since 1999, so has more clout in licensing negotiations and has a broad enough product portfolio to offer many one-off sets within themes like Icons and Ideas.

Indeed, to the surprise and delight of sci-fi geeks around the world, 10356 Star Trek Enterprise is delivering the USS Enterprise (NCC-1701-D) as a detailed, display-worthy LEGO set. It uses 3,600 pieces to craft the iconic ship from Star Trek: The Next Generation.

"This is definitely a dream come true for me, to be part of this project," says Graphic Design Manager Crystal Fontan. She currently works in the Games team, on themes like Fortnite, so had to make her case in order to be assigned to Hans' crew.

"I had to plead that this is a passion project," she recalls. "I lucked out that there are no trekkies around in graphic design."

Hans didn't get assigned to the set immediately either. "Our project manager, who also still has time to design a little bit, swooped in, being a little bit of a Star Trek fan and took over the project." But the veteran designer had his eye on the set. "Do I have to push him under a bus or something?!" he laughs. "How do I get assigned to it?

"But the truth is, as a project manager, you don't really have time for a model like this. So I let everybody know that I was willing to help should it be necessary. And it became necessary really quickly."

MAKING IT SO

Once assigned to the project, the two design professionals could begin their own exploration, just as Star Trek: The Next Generation saw Captain Jean-Luc Picard and the Enterprise crew explore unknown worlds every week. The series aired 178 episodes between 1987 and 1994, as audiences grew to embrace the new characters just as much as they had the crew of the original Star Trek series.

The show has had huge longevity and is generally regarded as the best iteration of the franchise, so there is a great deal of information available online that fans have created and curated.

"We're talking about a 40-year-old show," Hans says. "There's plenty of reference. Though it's important not to fall for any stuff that you google – you might find an interesting photo, use it for reference, then later realise that maybe the colours are a little different than they are in the show. But we work with Paramount, we have access to some super-secret stuff."

Hans' research was of course focused on The Next Generation era Enterprise. "The ship design is well documented, but not every iteration. The ship changed with every season, they swapped to different sizes of studio models and at one point they swapped to CGI."

"They gave us a bunch of style guides that helped us," Crystal adds. "Hans had a 1:1 schematic of the ship, so he kept referencing that schematic to make sure we were doing things accurately."

"We had to decide which version to do, which surface details we wanted to go with," Hans says. "It was especially important to me – as a fan – that I got to be the designer and got to make that decision."

He did not start where you would expect though. "We had a sketch model, which I then kept developing further. There wasn't much of the dish there yet. The starting point was not the dish, as one would suspect, given that it is the most difficult part of designing the ship. It was actually the engines.

"They defined the size and the scale of the engineering hull, then the dish was last for quite a while. I remember that we had to rescale at one point, once we had a definite scale on the dish. It was maybe a little smaller than originally intended, but not by much."

BOLDLY BUILDING

When LEGO designers come to tackle spaceships from film and television, they face the challenge that when visual effects artists come up with amazing imagery, it only has to work on screen – but these models have to exist in a physical space. The shape of the Enterprise, with the enormous overhanging dish, does not lend itself to being a displayable model.

Right: *10356 is the Enterprise as it was depicted in Star Trek: The Next Generation.*

Above: *10356 Star Trek Enterprise incudes nine minifigures.*

Left: *Senior Model Designer Hans Burkhard Schlömer and Design Manager Crystal Fontan wear Starfleet uniforms to present the set.*

"It was very important for us that this thing could sit on one single display arm, with no support under the dish. That was a big technical challenge, because the dish alone is around one and a half kilos," says Hans. "This is the mother of all overhanging constructions."

Fortunately though, he has some experience from designing massive Ultimate Collector Series sets during his lengthy period as part of the LEGO Star Wars team. "For example, say a Star Destroyer, you might remember has a massive internal skeleton with Technic bricks and beams going everywhere. That didn't work here because there is not enough space – the Enterprise is a structural nightmare to build with LEGO bricks.

"One trick is to build sideways with plates. Plates are quite bendy, but if you put them on the side, you suddenly have a very strong element. That's one trick that has helped to make this happen.

"There are a few building tricks, which I hope you will recognise once you build it – I think you'll find it is very solid. The back is two halves joined together in an interesting way."

The deflector dish is an essential icon on the Enterprise, so Crystal knew that it needed to be perfect. "The deflector dish is maybe quite a simple graphic, but it really was one of the most complicated graphics I ever had to create, because I needed to emulate glowing light in our design language. So it took many tries, many, many nightmares, a lot of talking back and forth to get this right. I really think that it enhances the whole model."

As fans know from the episode "Encounter at Farpoint", the Enterprise can split into sections – the saucer can detach from the rest of the vessel and operate independently. Hans was tasked with giving the model a separation feature.

"This is the mother of all overhanging constructions."

That's not something that is easily achieved in a spaceship made up of 3,600 pieces – a small model can have a detachable section held in place with Technic pins but sets of this size must be fully secured as disaster leads to a huge mess and a lengthy rebuild session.

To resolve the need for stability while delivering a detaching feature, Hans created a pin that locks the two sections together. It must be removed before the saucer can be separated, then you can slide off the engine section.

"I think they flew around with this in the show for a few minutes and

Above left: *The spaceship sits on a single arm.*

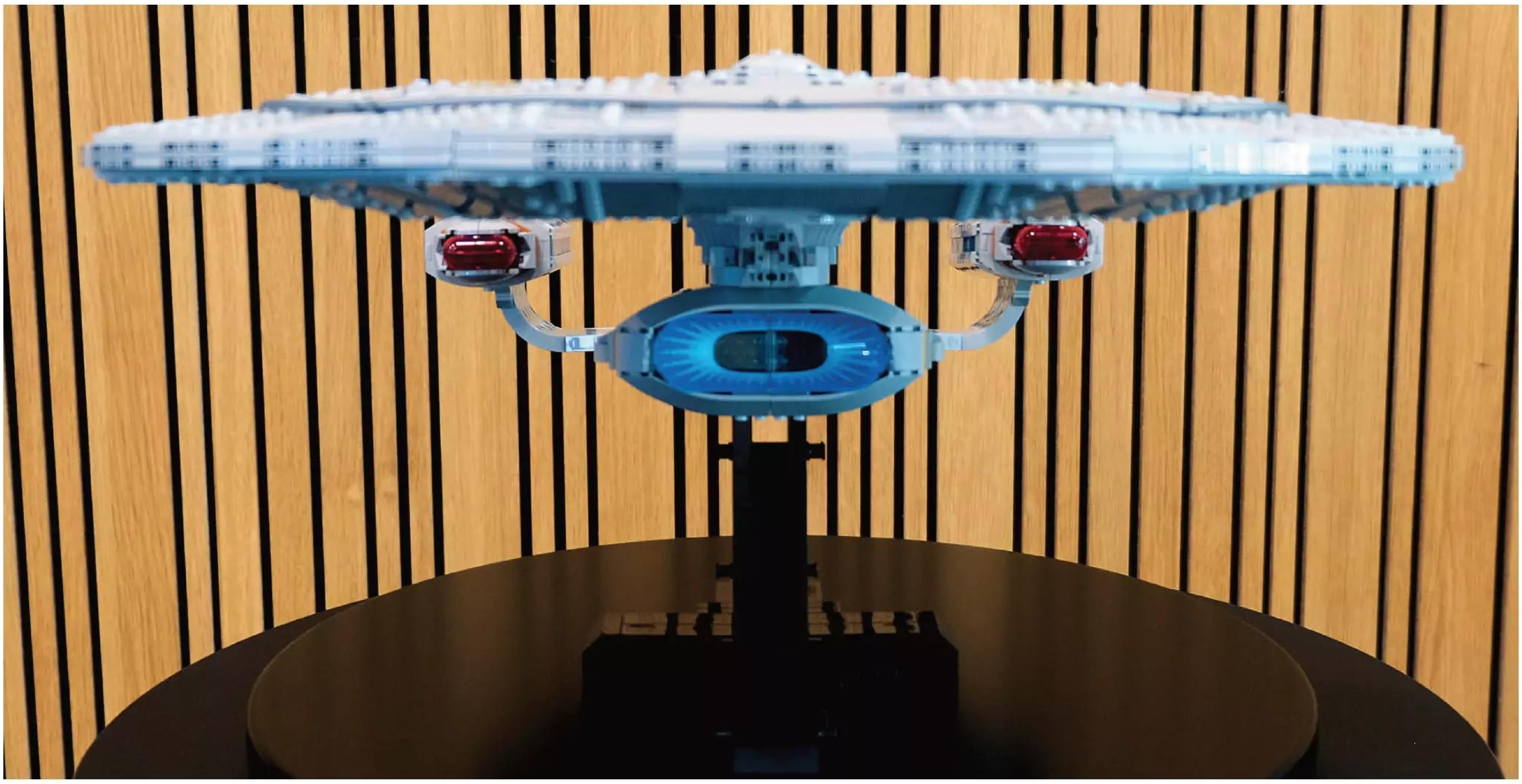
Above centre: *The saucer significantly overhangs.*

Above right: *Crystal designed the graphic for the deflector dish.*

Far right, top: *Picard comes with a hot cup of tea as an accessory.*

Far right, bottom: *The set includes a buildable display stand for the minifigures.*

Right: *Senior Model Designer Hans Burkhard Schlömer has ensured that the model is sturdy and solid.*



they realised it doesn't really look awesome anymore without a dish, so they put the dish back on," he laughs. "But don't forget the safety pin, otherwise your cat may have fun with this model."

CREWING THE ENTERPRISE

"We managed to get nine characters," says Crystal. "We have two new elements, Worf's head and Guinan's hat." Worf and Guinan are joined by Jean-Luc Picard, William Riker, Data, Geordi La Forge, Beverly Crusher, Wesley Crusher and Deanna Troi.

Fans know that the costumes change from season to season, so the design team thought about the most familiar depictions of the crew. "We were going back and forth to see what the most iconic uniforms were and the most iconic outfits for the characters," she explains. "We came up with a principle that we would probably use designs from between Season 2 and Season 5, with the exception of Wesley because his jumper is just way too iconic. That was actually a request by Paramount."

Working on licensed minifigures presents an interesting challenge – Crystal had to ensure that each character is completely recognisable and does justice to how they look on screen but to also consider the universality that elements should have.

"Paramount actually really wanted to have shoulder prints on the characters because it adds to the iconic-ness of it," she says. "We were thinking about LEGO elements out of context – you can take this torso and make yourself as a Starfleet minifigure, so when we designed Beverly, we left off the coat."

That was not the only bit of System thinking that went into the graphic design. Deanna Troy's datapad features a schematic of a LEGO brick. "I threw that in there thinking that it's fun, like a little tie-in of collaboration. But I didn't know if Paramount would like it because it's not canon. There aren't any LEGO bricks in Star Trek that I know of! They loved it, so we managed to put it in the set."

Not every minifigure accessory is about decoration though – Hans managed to use a sci-fi spaceship as an excuse to build a tiny musical instrument. "Riker plays jazz trombone," says Hans. "We see him practising every now and then, and since we added accessories to all the minifigures, it was pretty clear to me that Riker needed his trombone. This is, I believe, not only the first minifigure scale trombone, but the first LEGO brick trombone ever.

"I was very happy when I found out that we had all the elements we needed in gold. As a trombone player myself, I'm aware of how handy trombone stands are. I absolutely had to include that. The whole thing is my favourite side build."

A trombone has made Hans happy, but it might not be the aspect that most delights fans. More likely it will be the Picard and Striker minifigures. Even more likely it will be the technical ingenuity that has gone into the overhang. Scratch all of that – it will be the fact that, despite the odds being stacked against it ever happening, the Enterprise is now a LEGO set. Things are only impossible until they are not. ■

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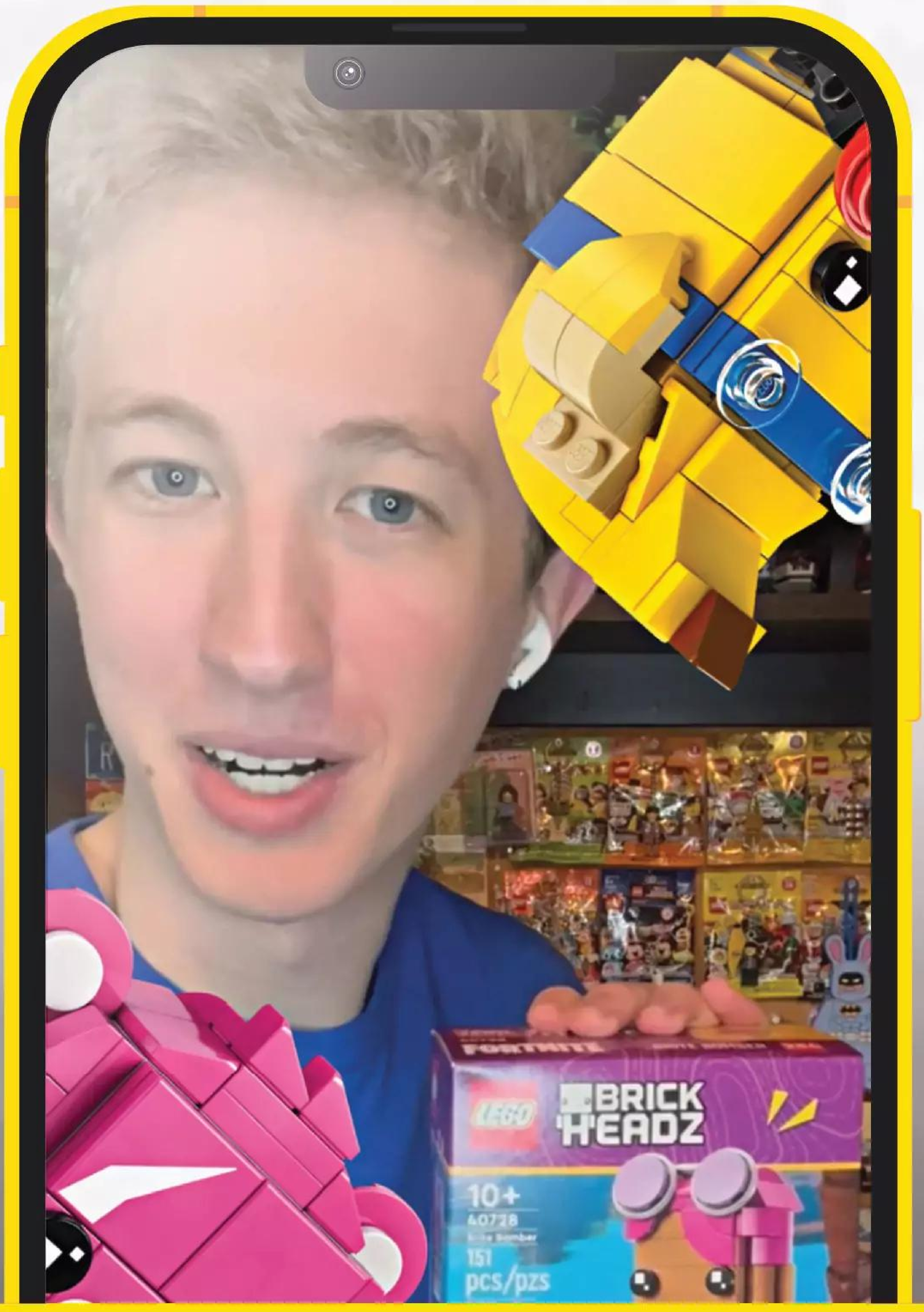
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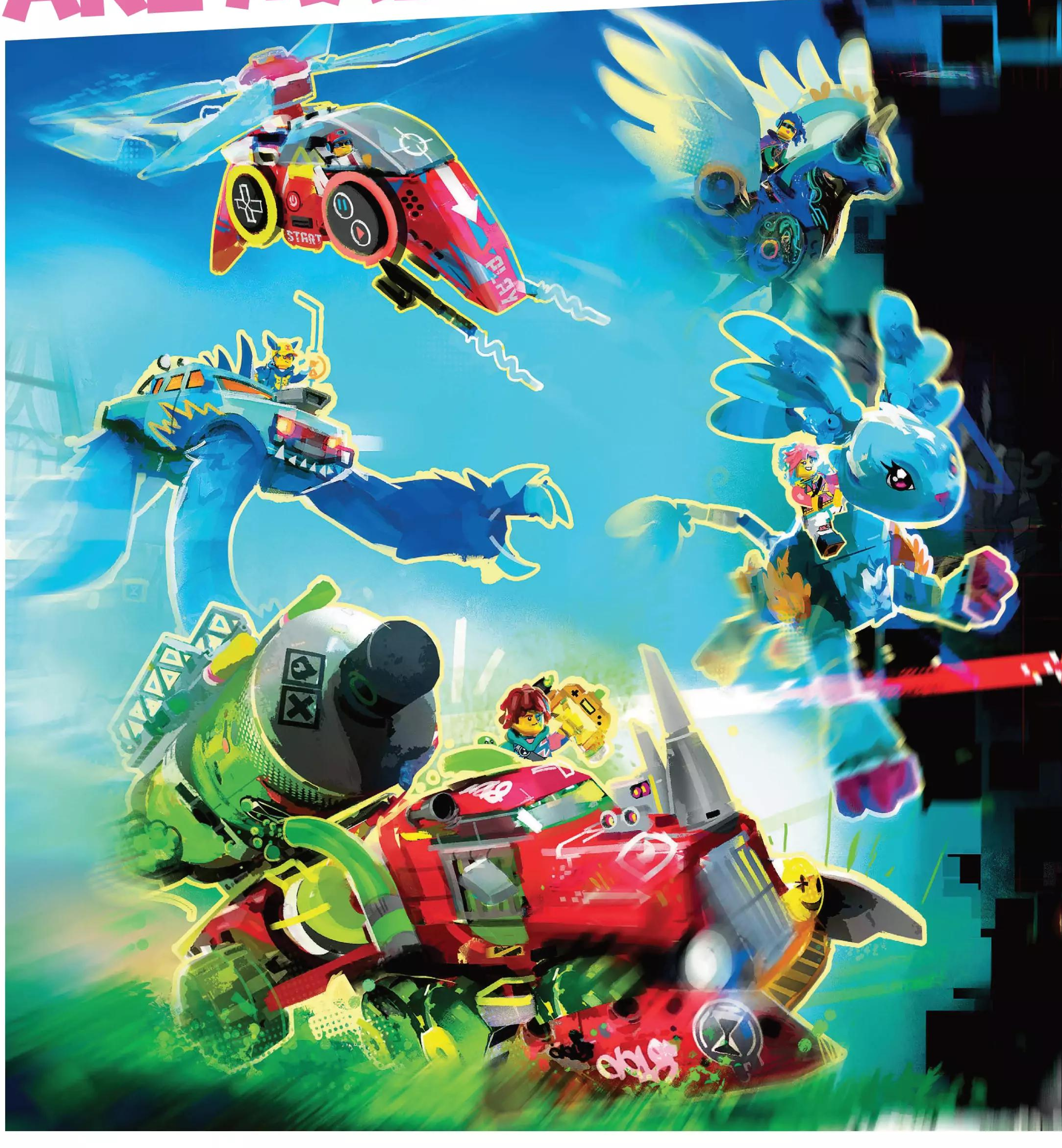
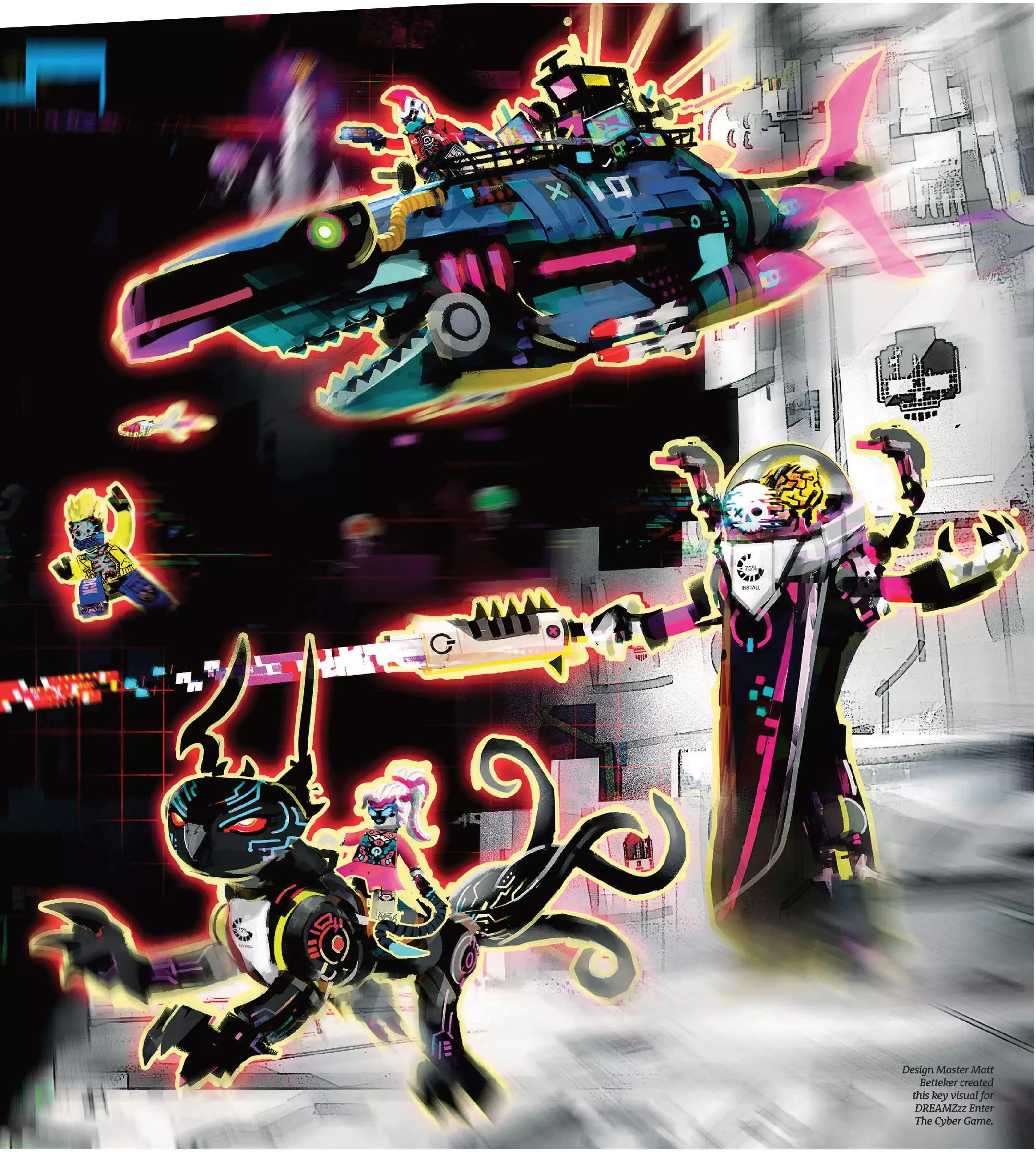
BLOCKSXMAS for 10% in December and January

SWEET DREAMS ARE MADE OF BRICKS

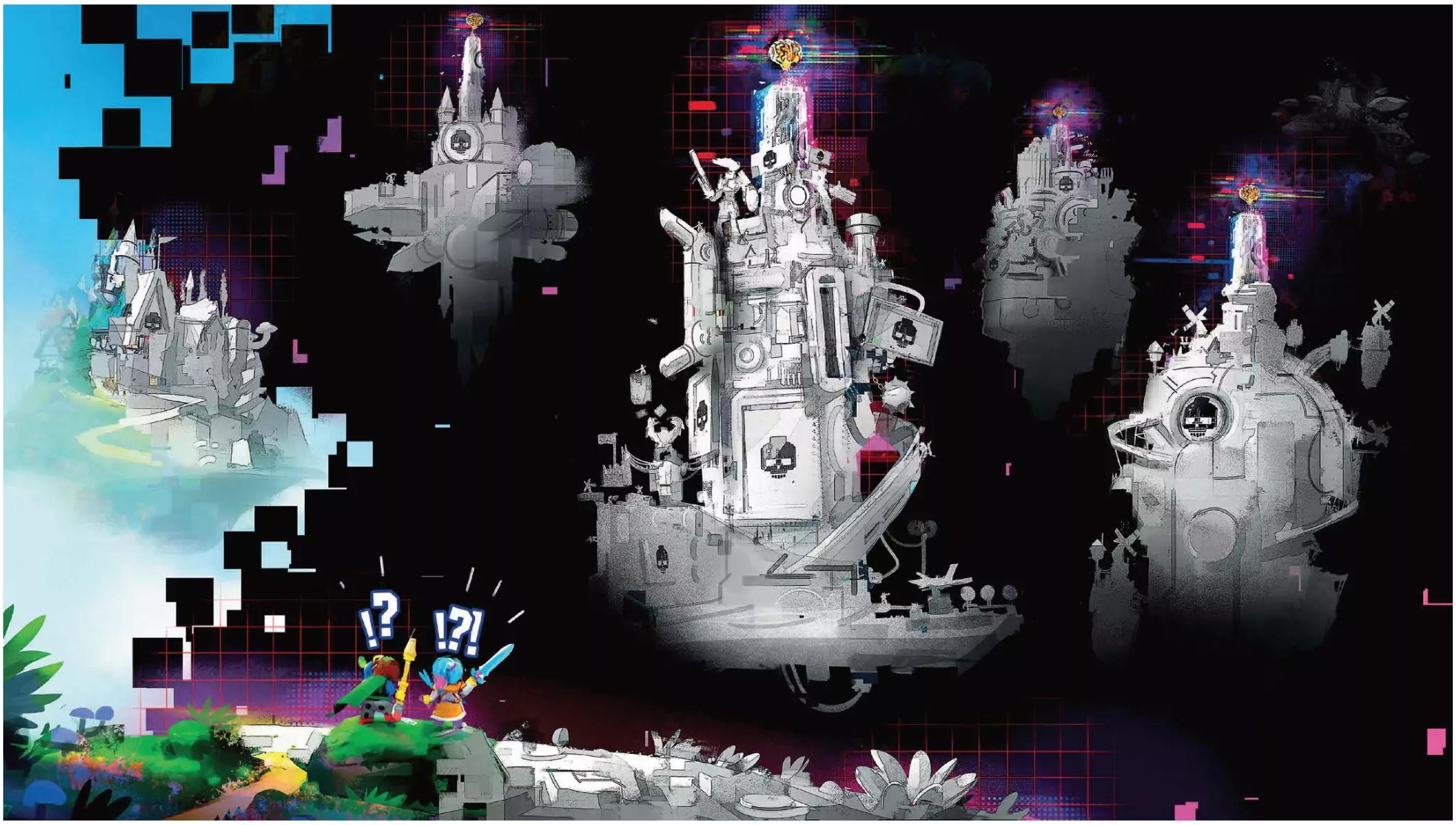


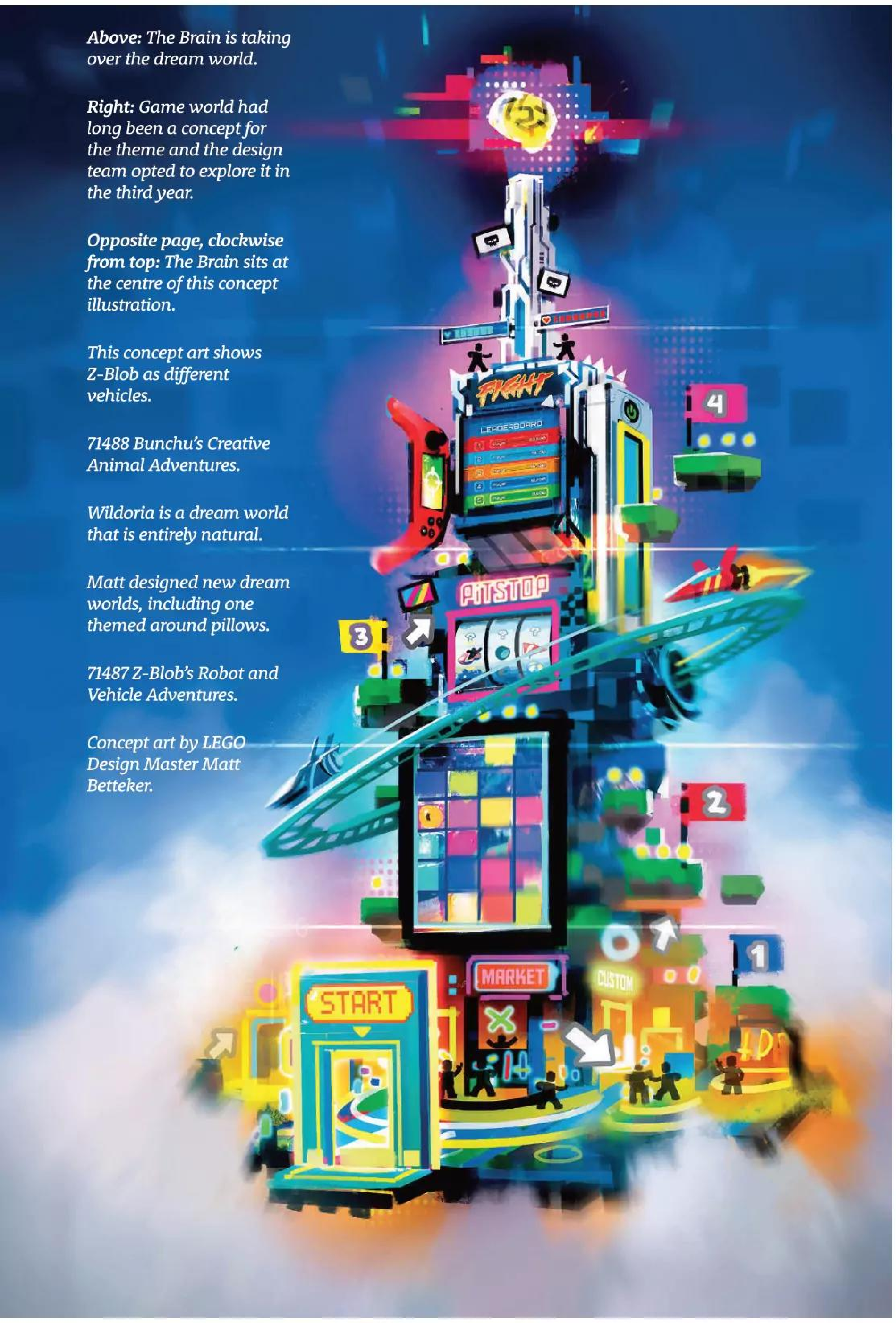
Creepy brains are on the attack and taking away the creativity of dreamers – the Dream Chasers must use their imaginations to craft giant spray can trucks and fire breathing chameleons in response. Design Director Cerim Manovi explains how he and the team thoughtfully develop the wildest LEGO theme of them all

Words: *Graham E. Hancock*



Design Master Matt Betteker created this key visual for DREAMZzz Enter The Cyber Game.





Above: *The Brain is taking over the dream world.*

Right: *Game world had long been a concept for the theme and the design team opted to explore it in the third year.*

Opposite page, clockwise from top: *The Brain sits at the centre of this concept illustration.*

This concept art shows Z-Blob as different vehicles.

71488 Bunchu's Creative Animal Adventures.

Wildoria is a dream world that is entirely natural.

Matt designed new dream worlds, including one themed around pillows.

71487 Z-Blob's Robot and Vehicle Adventures.

Concept art by LEGO Design Master Matt Betteker.

Almost every industry is expecting to face at least some degree of disruption as a result of artificial intelligence – generative AI is already making big changes to some areas of the economy. If your work could be affected, you may have already been having nightmares about the downsides of AI.

Presciently, the third year of DREAMZzz explores that exact territory. But given that the LEGO Group's most creative and wild theme is aimed at children, it isn't dealing with AI's impact on different sectors – it's encouraging children to question where the balance should lie between their own creativity and the possibilities AI provides.

"The dream world is such a vast environment where all the passion points can come alive," says Design Director Cerim Manovi, who has been guiding the development of the theme. "In the beginning when we had to find the different passion worlds in the larger dream world, game world was one of the big ones. It's a no brainer, it is of course something that the kids are really engaged in."

In the first two years of LEGO DREAMZzz, the theme and animated series established a lore around the dream world, a place where trained and talented people can explore consciously even when they are asleep. Mateo, Izzie and their friends visit different worlds and face different threats as they become Dream Chasers, agents who are responsible for keeping the dream world safe.

"We wanted to do fantasy first, then move into the sci-fi level. Of course AI is a big topic, it's very important, it's very contemporary. For the kids, they are like the first generation that had the iPad – AI is available to them, with different tools.

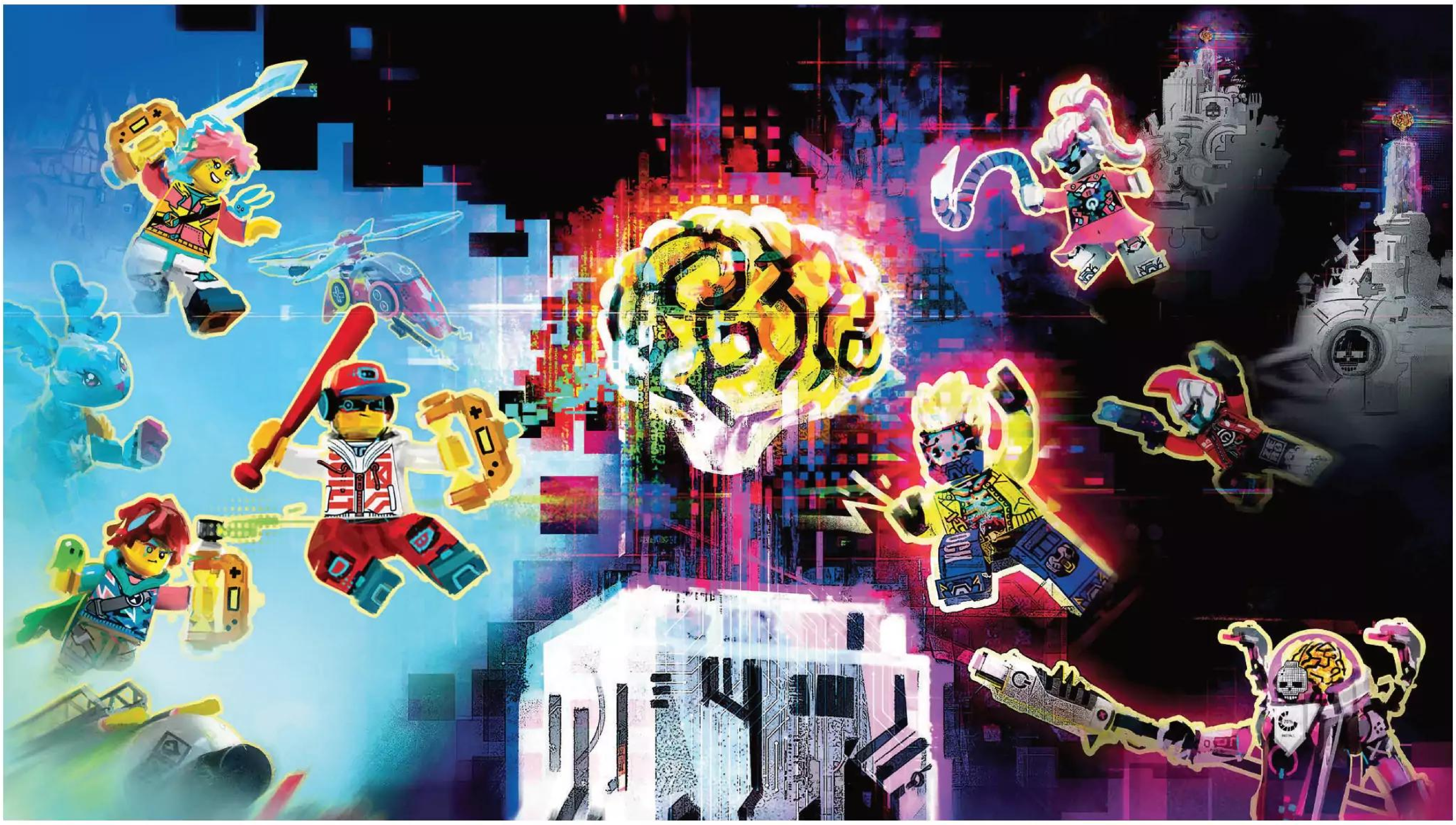
"So we thought about not necessarily making it bad. That's not what the story is about – but we wanted to create awareness around it, the old idea that with great power comes great responsibility. That translated into the design DNA of Zero and One. You see all of the hints that go back to the computerisation."

In the Season 3 storyline, Happy App is taking over everyone's lives, draining their imagination and reshaping their dreams, in a nod towards the risks of excessive screen time. In the dream world, Dreamsmasher presents himself as a hero – but the mysterious character is not all of that he seems.

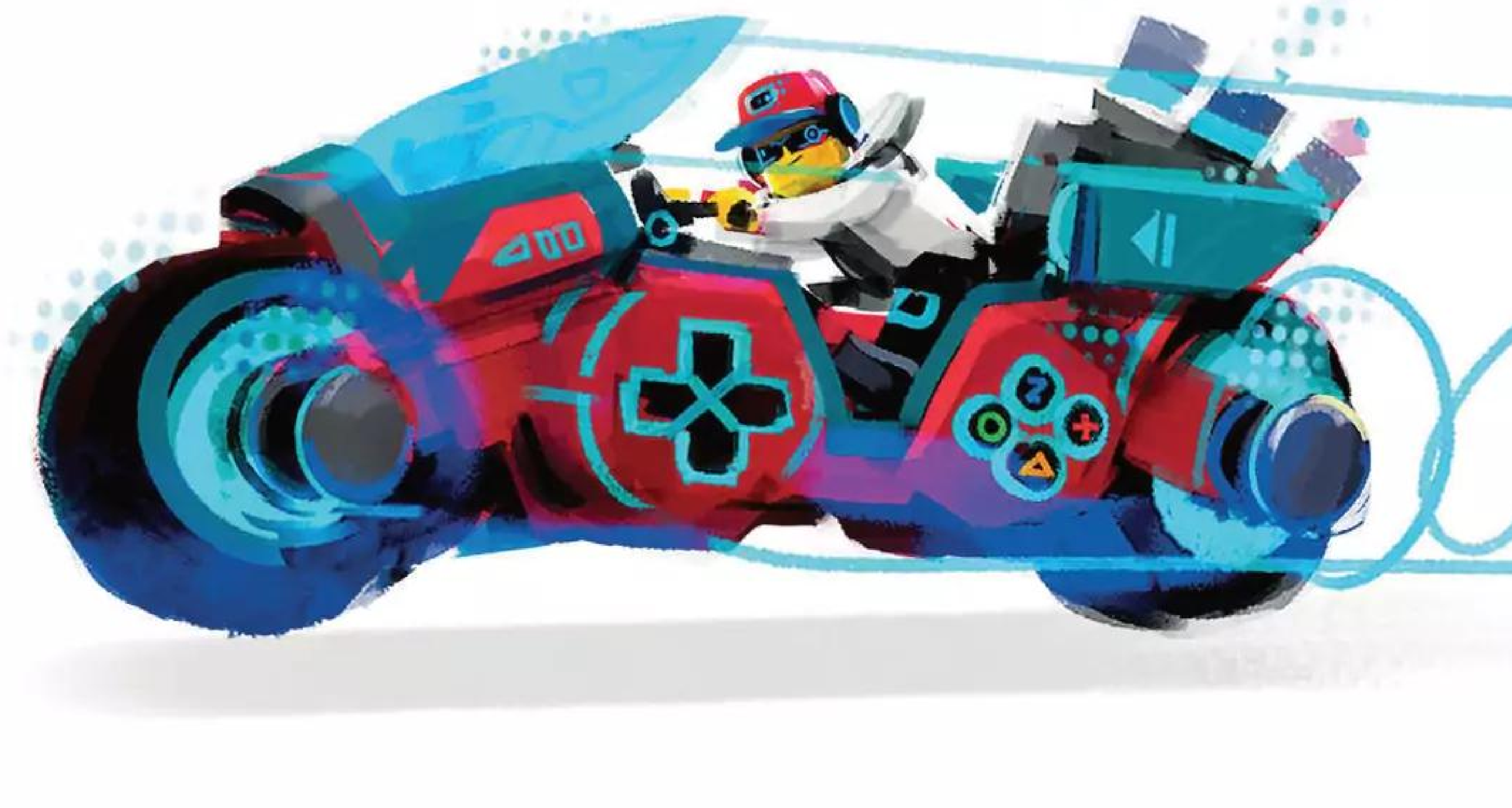
Along with One and Zero, Dreamsmasher is controlled by The Brain – a sentient AI that wants to turn creativity into algorithms. If they are to defeat The Brain, the Dream Chasers must use their imaginations in new and unpredictable ways.

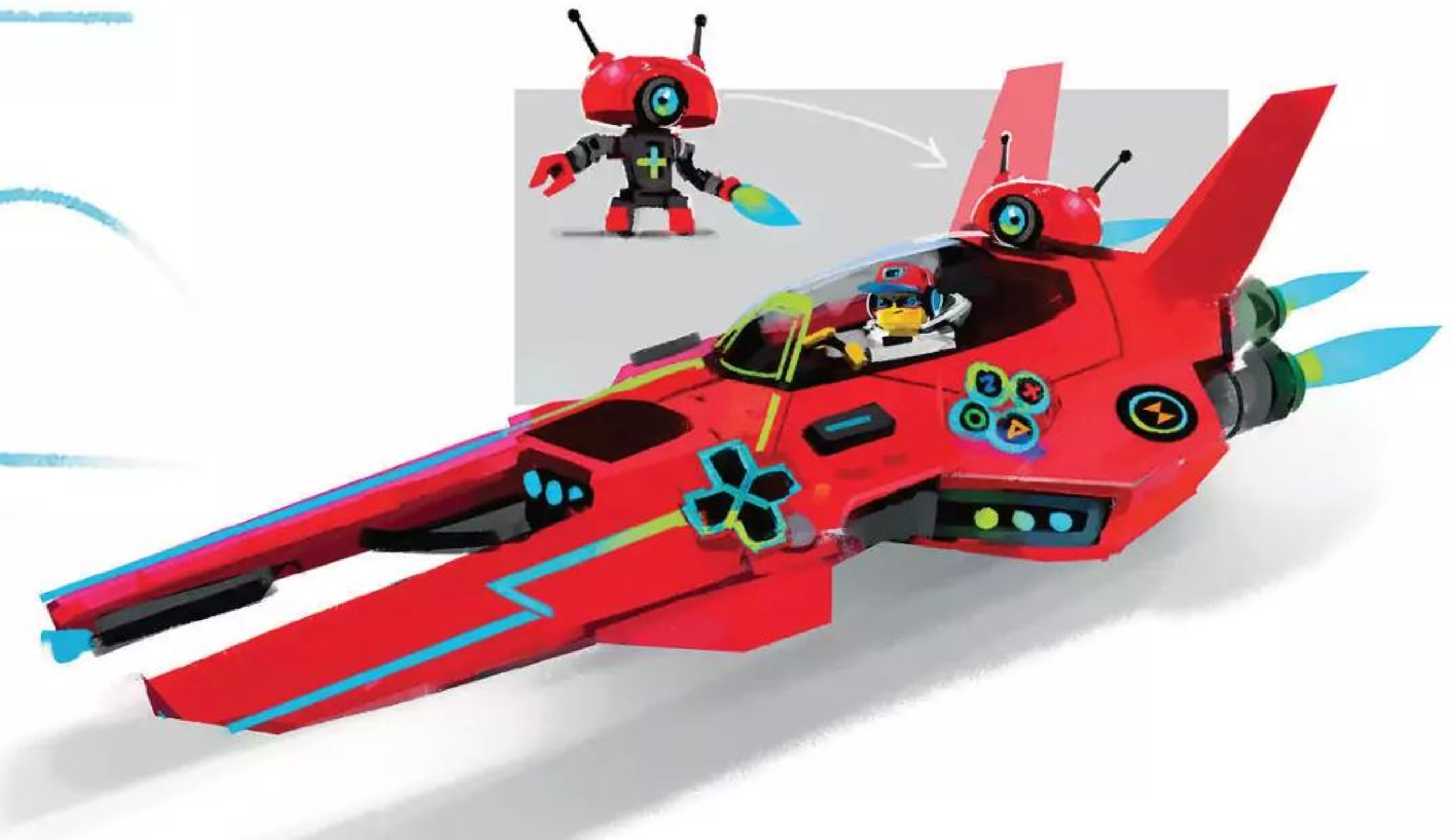
20 IN 1

DREAMZzz has always been focused on creativity. Not only is the storyline focused on a group of characters harnessing the power of



> “AI is a big topic. It’s very important.”





their imaginations, but the sets provide multiple build options, so when you reach a certain point in the instruction book you choose how to complete the model.

This year, the team has taken the idea of multiple builds in a single box to the next level. "I am particularly fond of the low price points," says Cerim. "It's always tricky to make unique low price points and we managed to put so much play and build possibilities in there."

The two sets he is referring to are 71487 Z-Blob's Robot and Vehicle Adventures and 71488 Bunchu's Creative Animal Adventures, one small box for each of the main characters.

"How much creativity can we cram into a low price point and how much possibility can we showcase to the kids? We want to inspire the kids to build beyond the building instruction. By giving them so many options, we are asking, 'where's yours?'"

The DREAMZzz team came up with dozens and dozens of models to demonstrate what can be done with the same assortment of bricks. "We always start with more." They distilled it down so that each set provides instructions for 20 options.

Cerim and the team chose the most recognisable and the most buildable models for children. 71487 can build robots, planes, spaceships, drones, helicopters and cars… 71488 can build bears, birds, cats, snails, giraffes… the designers really are showcasing how a relatively small number of bricks can do a lot.

"There is a play cycle; the kid builds, plays, maybe rebuilds a bit, plays, then the pieces go into the brick bin, then it becomes something else. We wanted to see if we can get that play cycle for longer, so you build, play, build, play, build, play."

A FLYING CONTROLLER

Given that the subject matter for the year is gaming, 71489 Cooper's Gaming Controller Jet is a key model in the range. "The game controller is really cool because it is a very clear icon, which is not a vehicle but an object that all kids know.

"Then we said, 'okay, how could we actually do something that is meaningful, cool, that has the right vibe?' The gaming controller jet can also be a helicopter. It is fun to see how far we can push the icon, how far can we push the understanding of something like this.

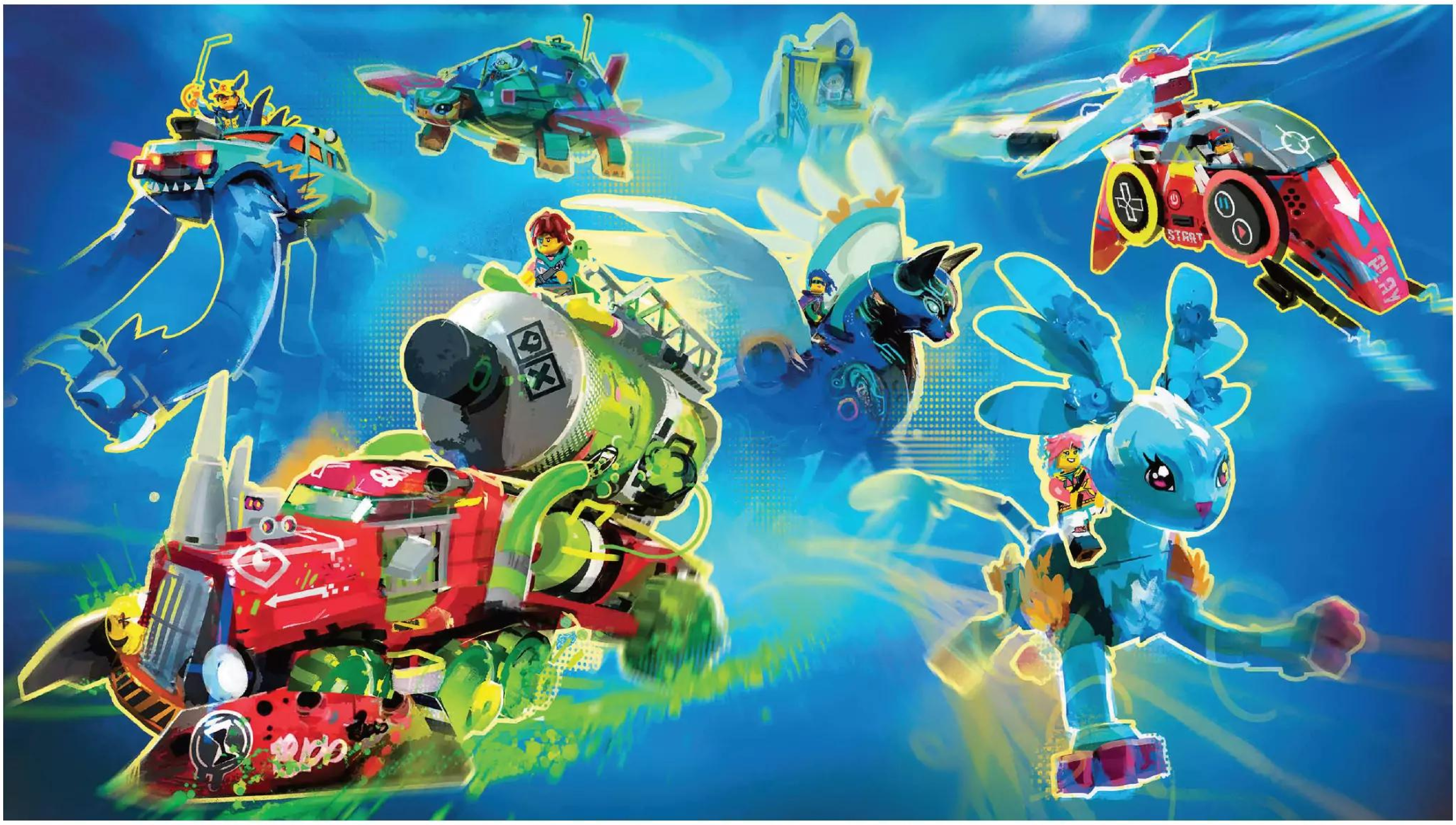
"The first thing that you build is the controller. Then you start building up on that and you see that those shapes can actually become a really cool glider or spaceship. Again, pushing the colours, trying to really spin for more fantasy in the more tech and sci-fi loop.

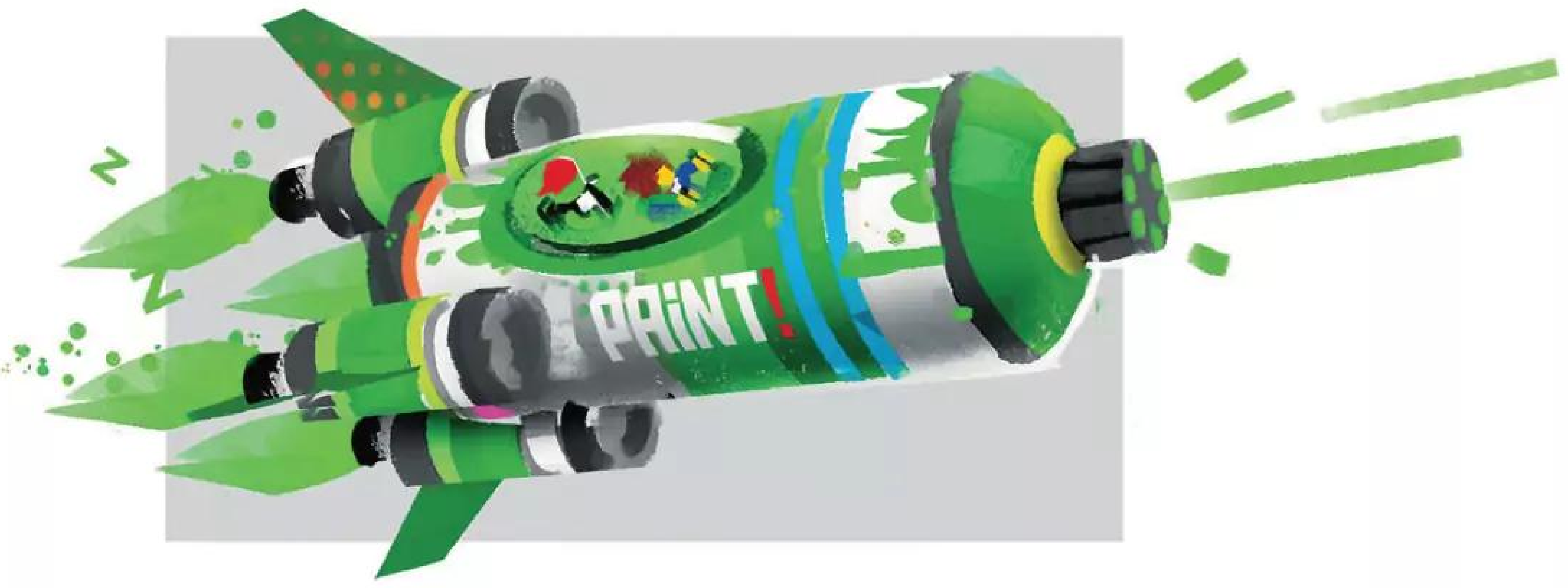
"The idea is a bit about inspiring kids to see the camera or see something else out there and say, 'this can become something different than it was before.'"

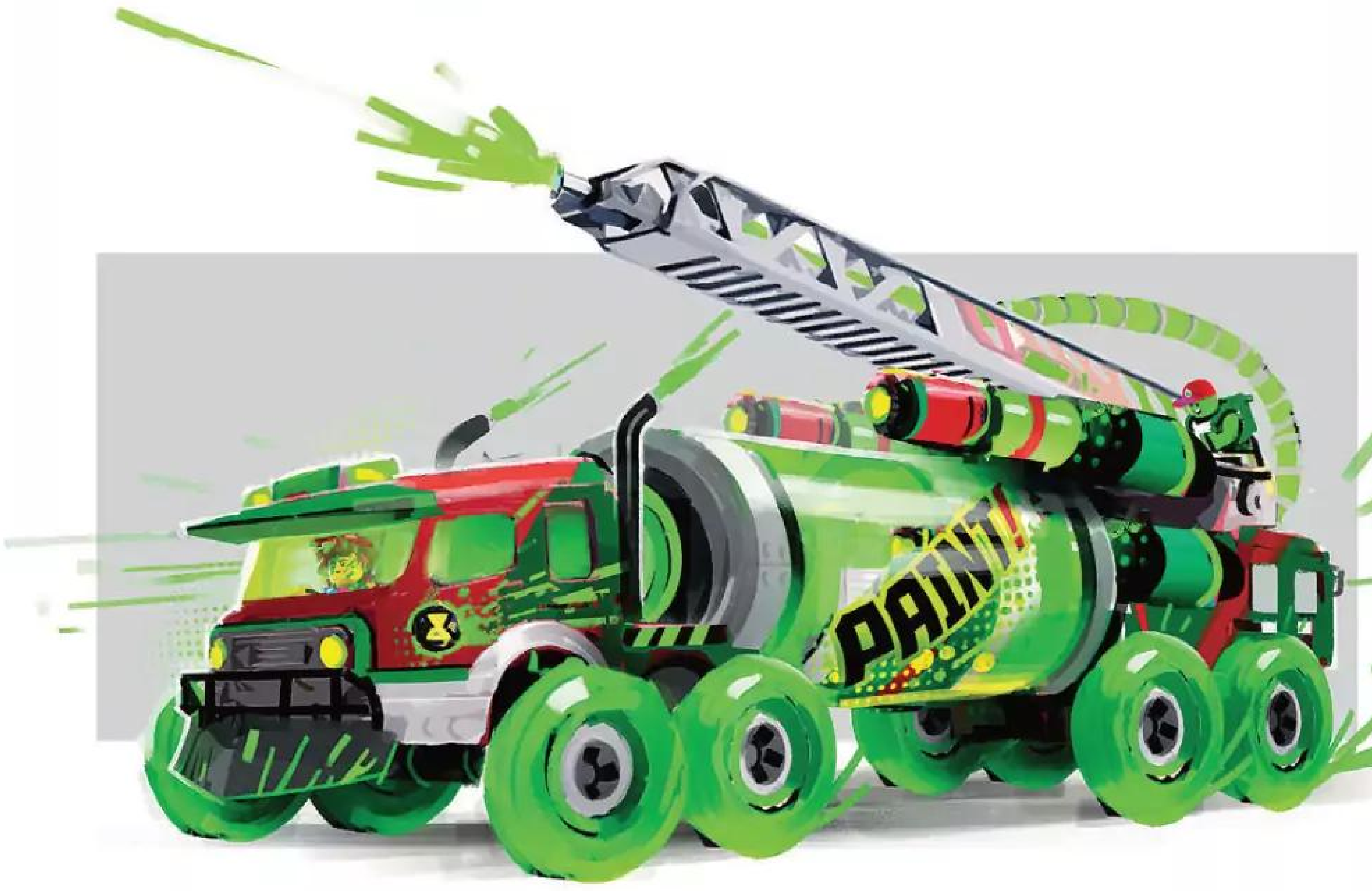
SPRAY PAINT TRUCK

In the 2025 sets, Z-Blob has a new look. The designers made a new element to better capture the shape of how Mateo's creation appears in the animation. "Z-Blob really comes alive – we have a 1:1 translation from TV show to the brick.

"Originally we used the dome part, we wanted to go more into the







systemised approach then. Then after we established the character, we also heard the fans and the kids saying, 'but where is Z-Blob as we know him from the show?'"

And Z-Blob has quite the escapade in the truly wild 71499 Mateo's Spray Paint Truck. It's a big, beefy truck with an enormous spray paint canister on the back – and as with many of Mateo's creations, it's clear that Z-Blob has taken over and the paint it fires will be huge quantities of goo.

"You see him coming alive in there," says Cerim. "It was great fun to find a new passion point combination. The spray can shows creativity and the idea of bringing colour back to the dream world. We have this AI that basically wants to structure the dream world, but chaos is part of the creative process."

It's not only a Mateo creation though. "We wanted to create a Cooper/Mateo combo. We looked at the characters and the vehicles are always a big passion point for Cooper. That's why you see the very clear red in there. Then Z-Blob jumps in and you have the can that is showcasing Mateo's artwork. It's about combining those two passions and creating something new, in order then to have a unique tool for them."

Cerim and his team do not miss any opportunity to put colour schemes throughout the models to maintain character consistency – and of course to just make really cool sets.

"I think the green wheels are highlights, because that is something we have never done before. That was the first time where we looked at whether could we do the tyre in the translucent colours on the wheel. It took great effort to get them in, but they are so vibrant and so cool and so defining for the line. We really wanted to utilise every little component that we have."

It's not the only piece that the team recoloured in transparent bright green. Mateo has a new cape that really gives the character some extra pizazz and of course, it's a Z-Blob cape.

The sets now go beyond the two different build options, as they also have modules attached by common connectors – that means you can take sections from one set and put them on another, harking back to a feature that was common in Space themes during the 1980s and 1990s.

"You can exchange all of them," says Cerim. "That was another part of bringing novelty to all of them. You can take the pieces from the spray can truck, then actually put them onto the Shark Submarine and cross play."

That modularity also makes switching between the build options more straightforward, as some of the theme's previous sets, like 71469 Nightmare Shark Ship, required significant dismantling before they could be rebuilt into the alternate mode.

DIGITAL VILLAINY

The Brain has help from Cyber Brain minions to carry out the nefarious plan to drain creativity. With a digital concept behind the bad guys, it would have been logical to go down the route of an angular computer, but the design team opted for something more visually striking and intriguing.

"The Cyber Brain was a cool element to do. Why not do something that has that look and feel? When the kid sees it, they straight away see what it is and it has a little bit of that creepy side, it creates a little bit tension – but colourful tension.

"Because it's still transparent and it looks very modern in that sense, with the white design on it. But it has a villain vibe around it. And that was one of the core ingredients when we started conceptualising the story on this one."

Cyber Brains appear in a number of the sets, where they can menace the Dream Chasers. The main villain model this time around is 71500

__Top left:__ Matt illustrated this bike concept for Cooper.

__Top centre:__ This illustration for a speeder for Cooper features gaming iconography.

__Top right:__ In this image, the spray paint can has become a rocket.

__Above right:__ A concept for the spray paint truck.

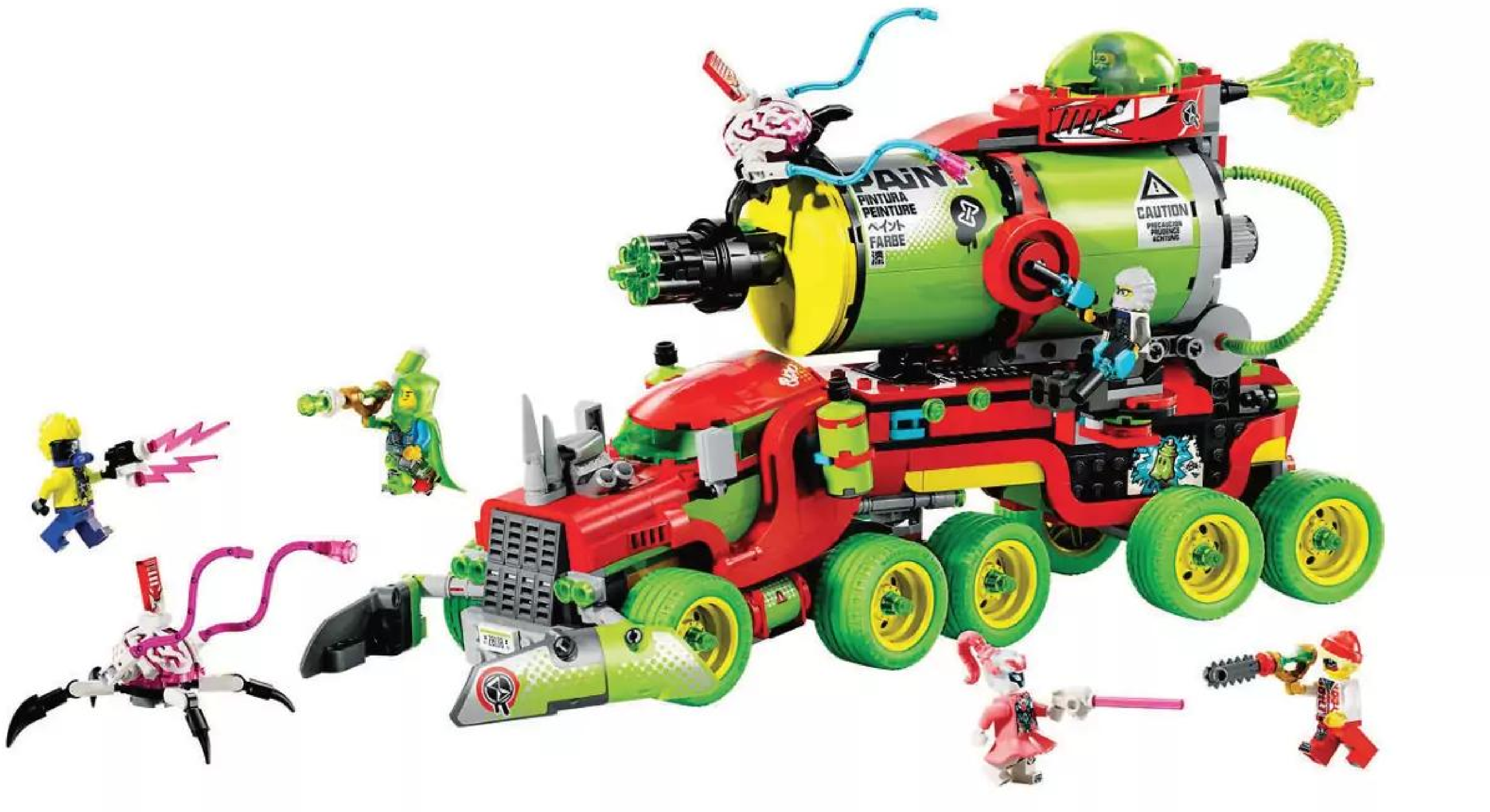
__Left:__ Matt illustrated this conceptual image of the Dream Chasers and their latest rides.

__Right, top:__ 71499 Mateo's Spray Paint Truck.

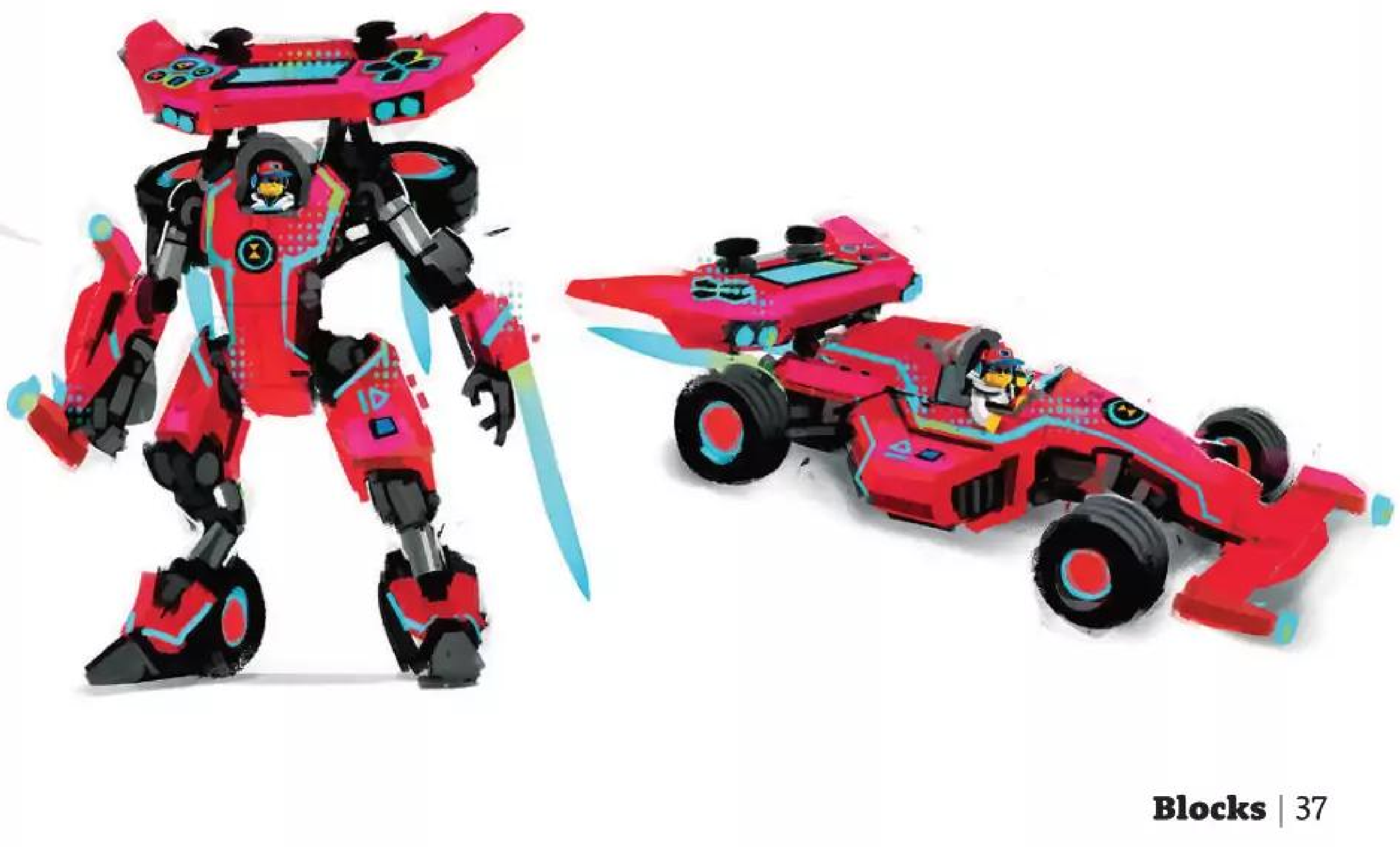
__Right:__ 71489 Cooper's Gaming Controller Jet.

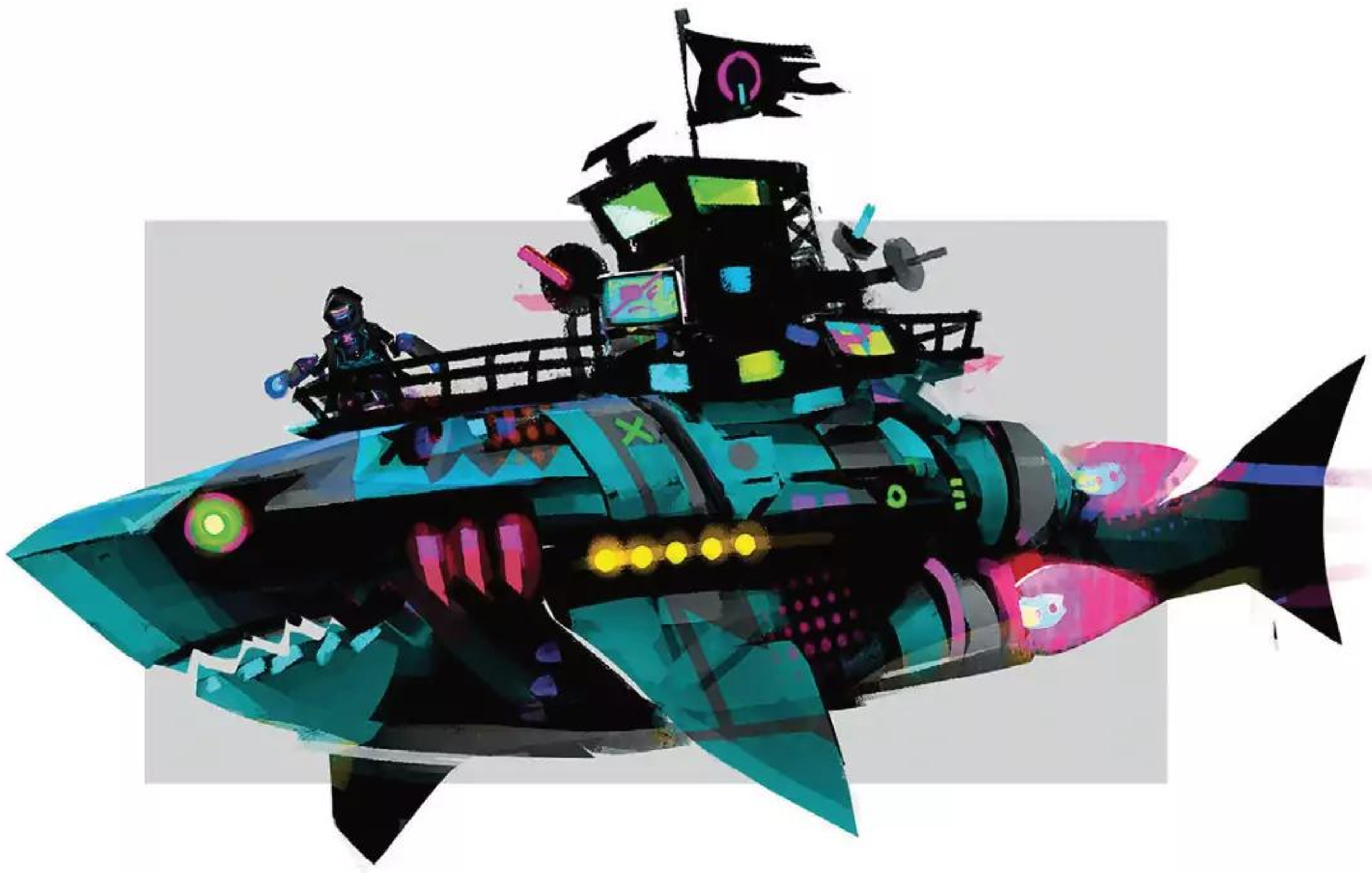
__Far right:__ This concept art shows ideas for a gaming controller infused vehicle.

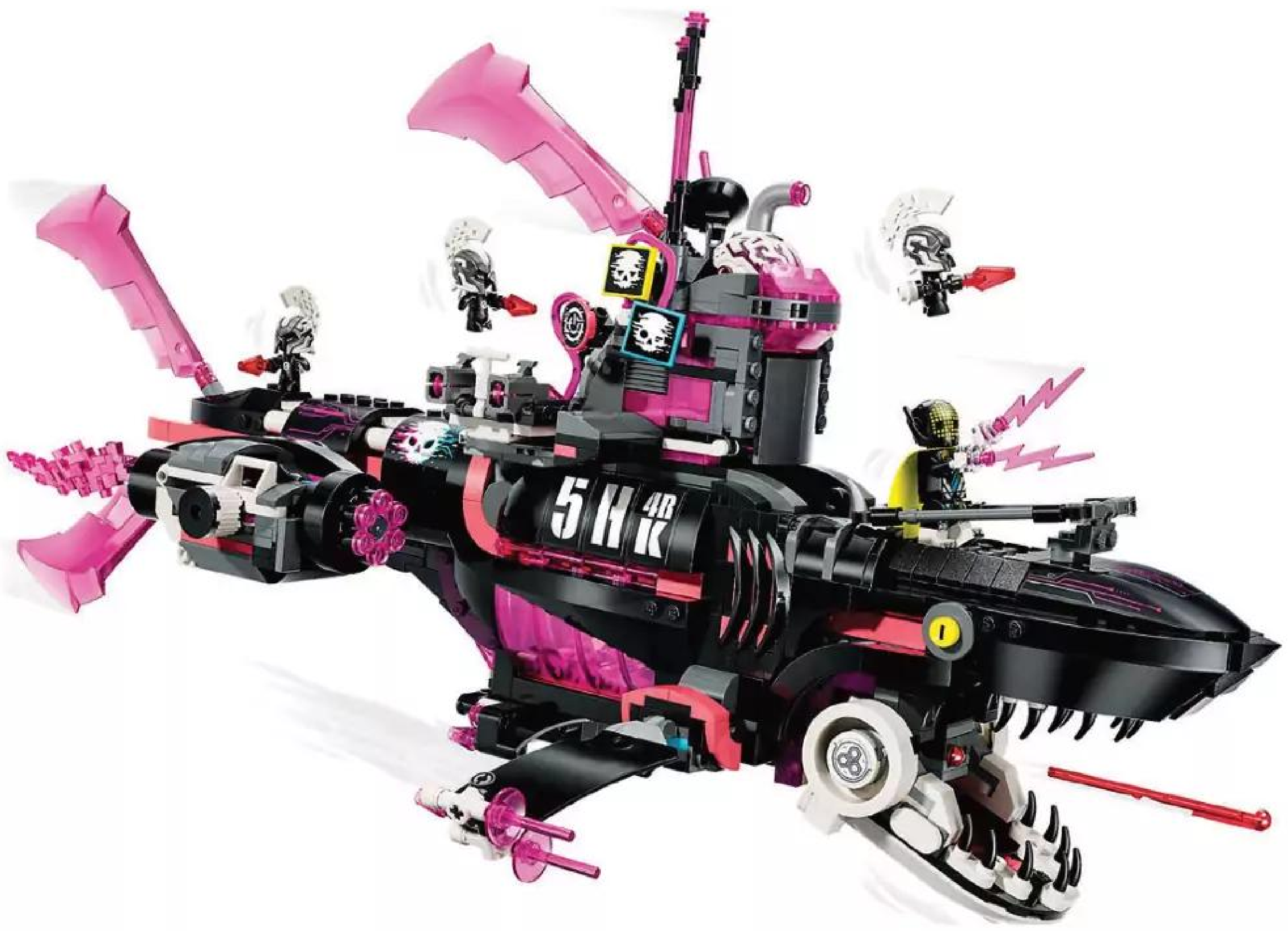
Concept art by LEGO Design Master Matt Betteker.



> "Ideas never truly die, they infuse the next cycle of development."







Nightmare Shark Submarine, reminiscent of 71469.

"It was great fun to take an icon that we have and say, 'okay, how can we bring this back but make it different?' This time it's the hammerhead shark submarine. I worked on NINJAGO for a long time, we always brought the Destiny's Bounty back, as we do in Star Wars with the Millennium Falcon.

"The shark ship was something so iconic for us and you can do tons of cool different versions. It just made sense to say 'okay, what are other aquatic vehicles that are out there that could fit this? Of course we did tons of different exercises around it – is it a wheeled vehicle? Is it really flying? Is it double sharks? What else can we match this up with?

"Instead of leaning into the pirate style, we went for something more like a cyber submarine. This whole idea of scouting and spying on stuff in a submarine just felt so right. It's a dream space and you want to move around the void, so it fitted that we wanted something for the villains to be able to move across the dream worlds in, without using the portals. They are always on the side somewhere, hiding."

Like the earlier set, the form of the submarine is entirely based around the body of a shark in a striking black and purplish colour scheme. It includes a nice mix of hero and villain minifigures so that builders can stage an epic battle for the dream world.

"It has a lot of cool functional bits like the transparent belly prison, we took the rib cage and then turned it into that. It has the moving jaw piece. There are a lot of cool secret little play features. It is great fun to take something that you have established and then revisit it."

THE DESIGN PROCESS

Fans were given a glimpse of what would have been the largest 2025 DREAMZzz set when images surfaced earlier this year, but unfortunately the set was dropped before it was officially announced. Cerim can't comment on 71501 Game Island Tower specifically, but he can speak generally about not everything that is designed actually being released:

"We of course always start wider than the finished assortment to spread the net, see what works and so on. We drop things in different stages, we can change things, we can react to circumstances when they change or when parameters change. Usually that happens in an early stage.

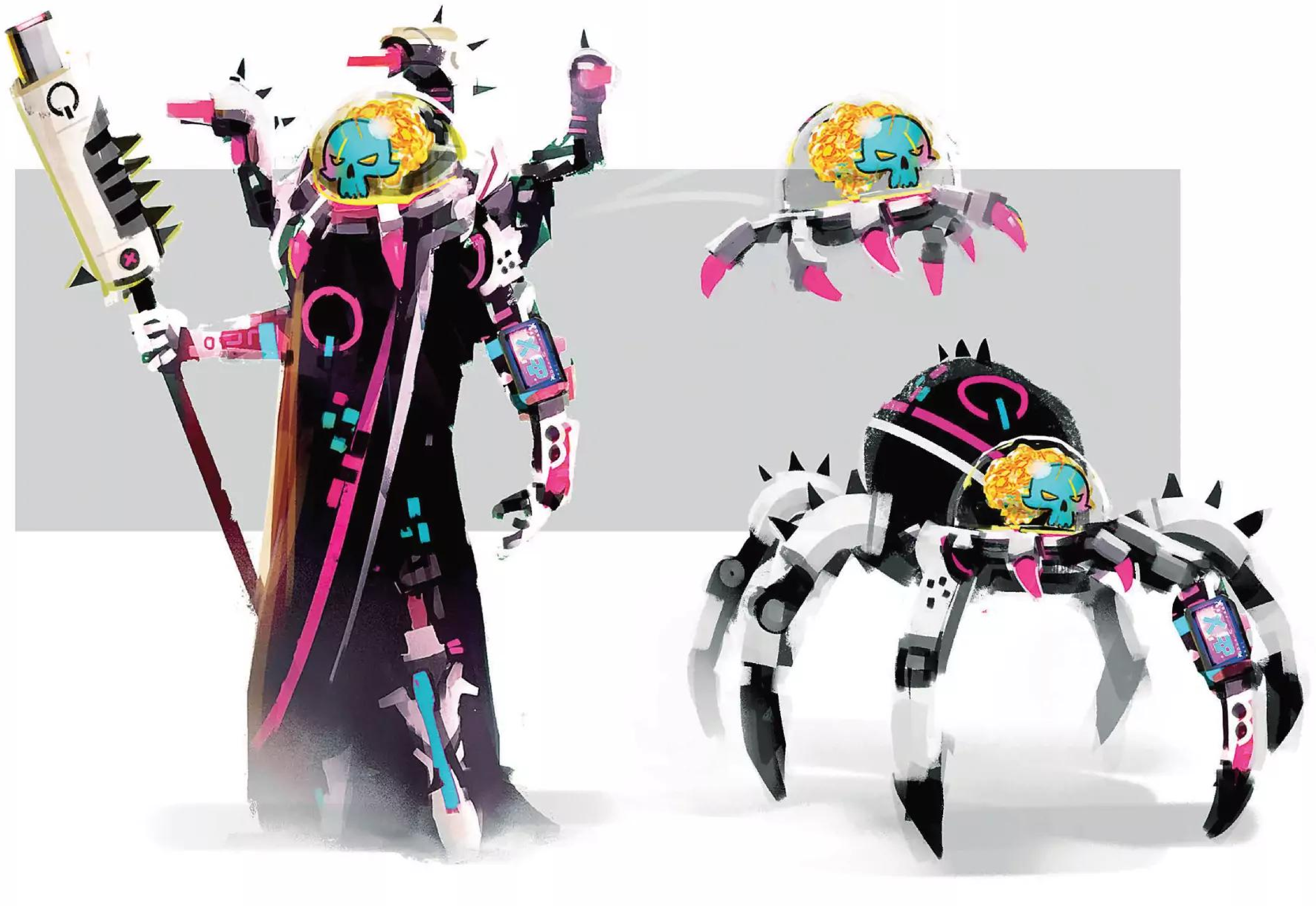
"Sometimes you're almost done with the product and then sadly you have to let it go. There's a lot of heart and passion that goes into these products and the further you develop it, the more it hurts when it does not see the light of day.

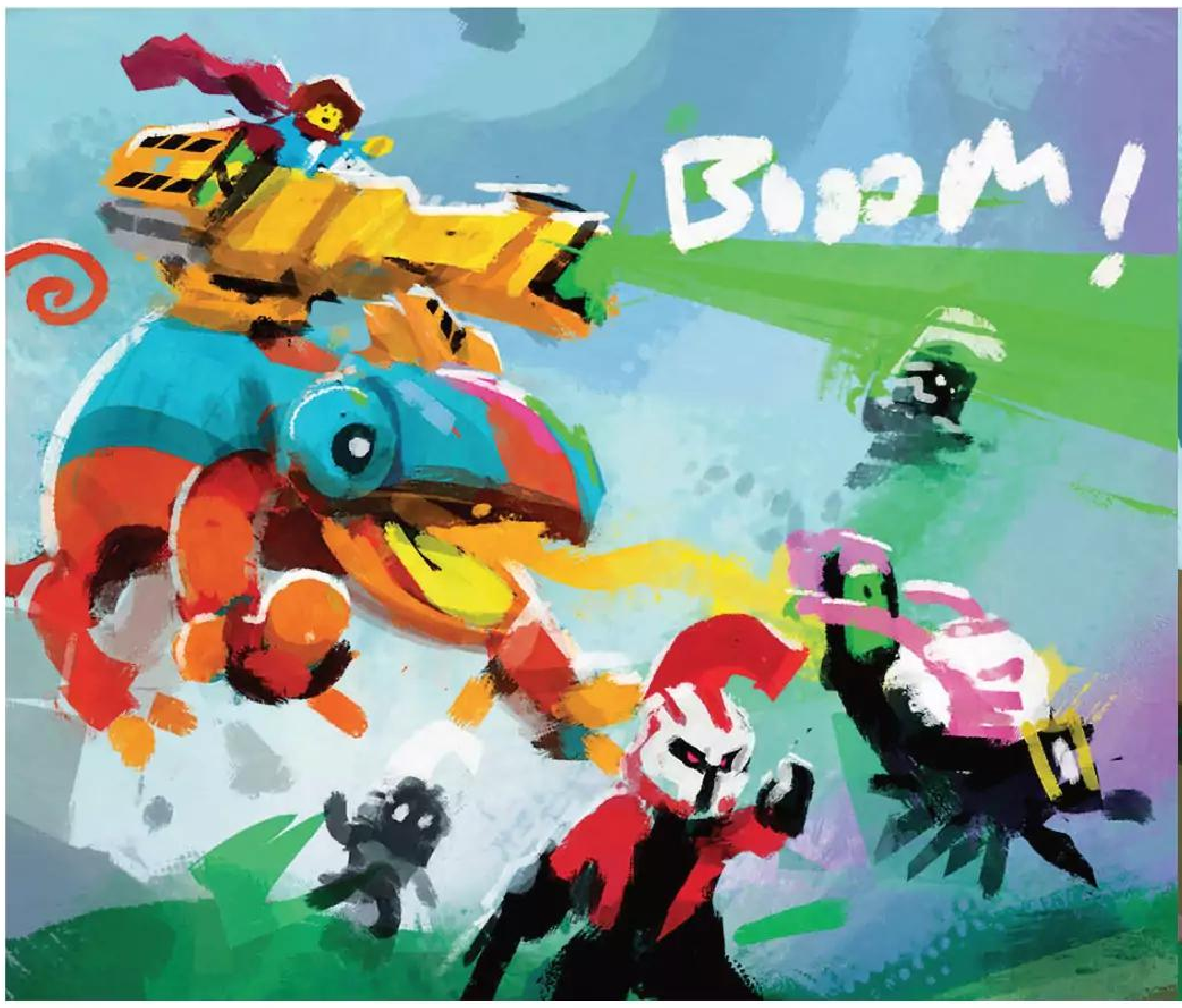
"But it is part of the design job. I've done so many things that have never seen the light of day. But the good part is that ideas never truly die, they infuse the next cycle of development. There is always a great learning in whatever you do – for the company, for the project, but also for the individual."

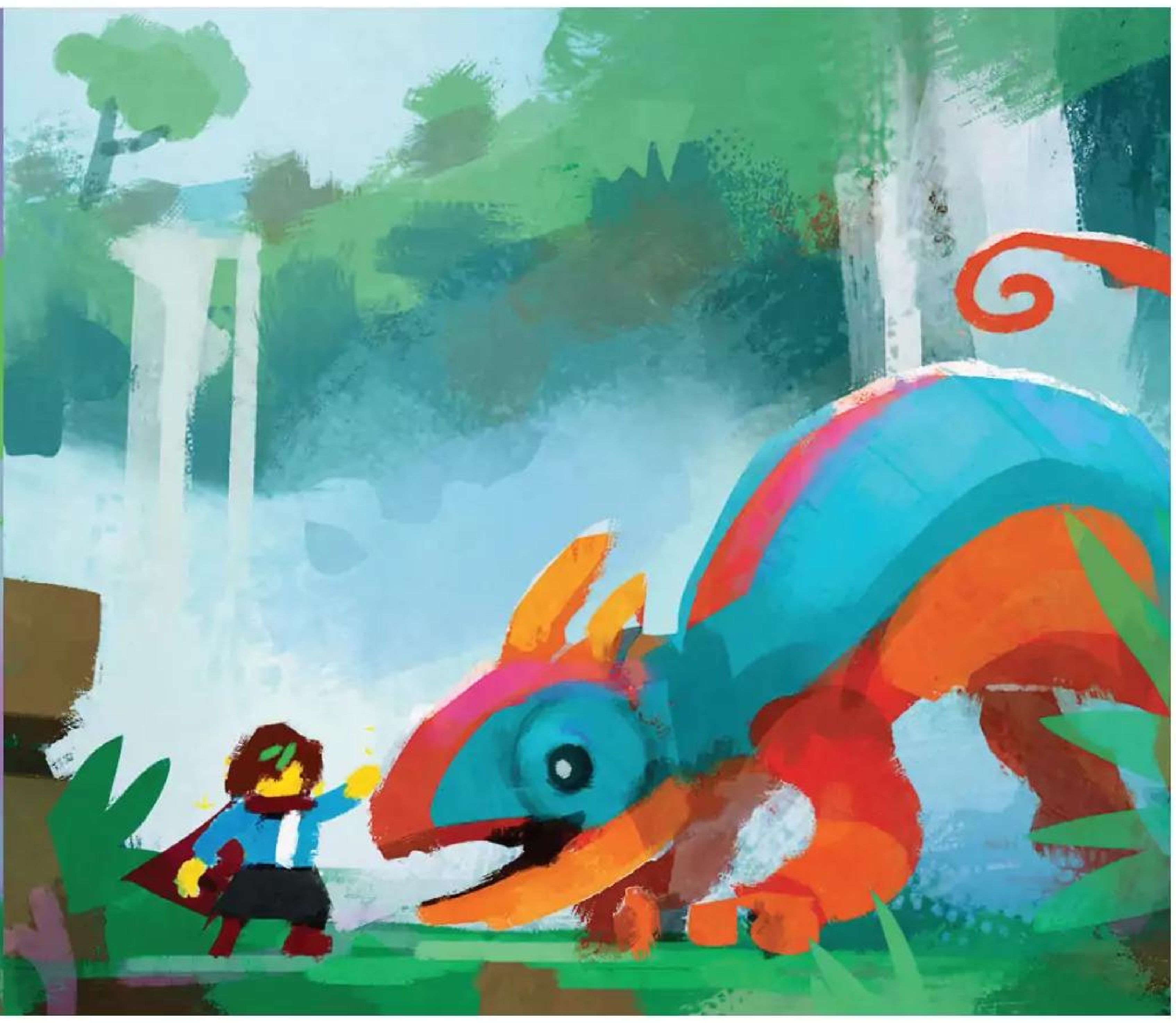
While fans will always be a little disappointed to know that a set was very far along in the production process and didn't make it out, there is clearly plenty within the DREAMZzz theme to keep builders busy – where else can you find a spray paint truck, a shark submarine, a gaming controller jet and a fire-breathing chameleon in the same assortment?

Proud as Cerim is of what has come in 2025, he is also looking forward to seeing fans react to what is coming in 2026. "The sets that will come out are fantastic. We always say that our newest creations are the coolest that we have done so far – but I think they're really cool, very colourful, very iconic. They're very clear and true to the characters. I'm really proud of them and the whole team that worked on them.

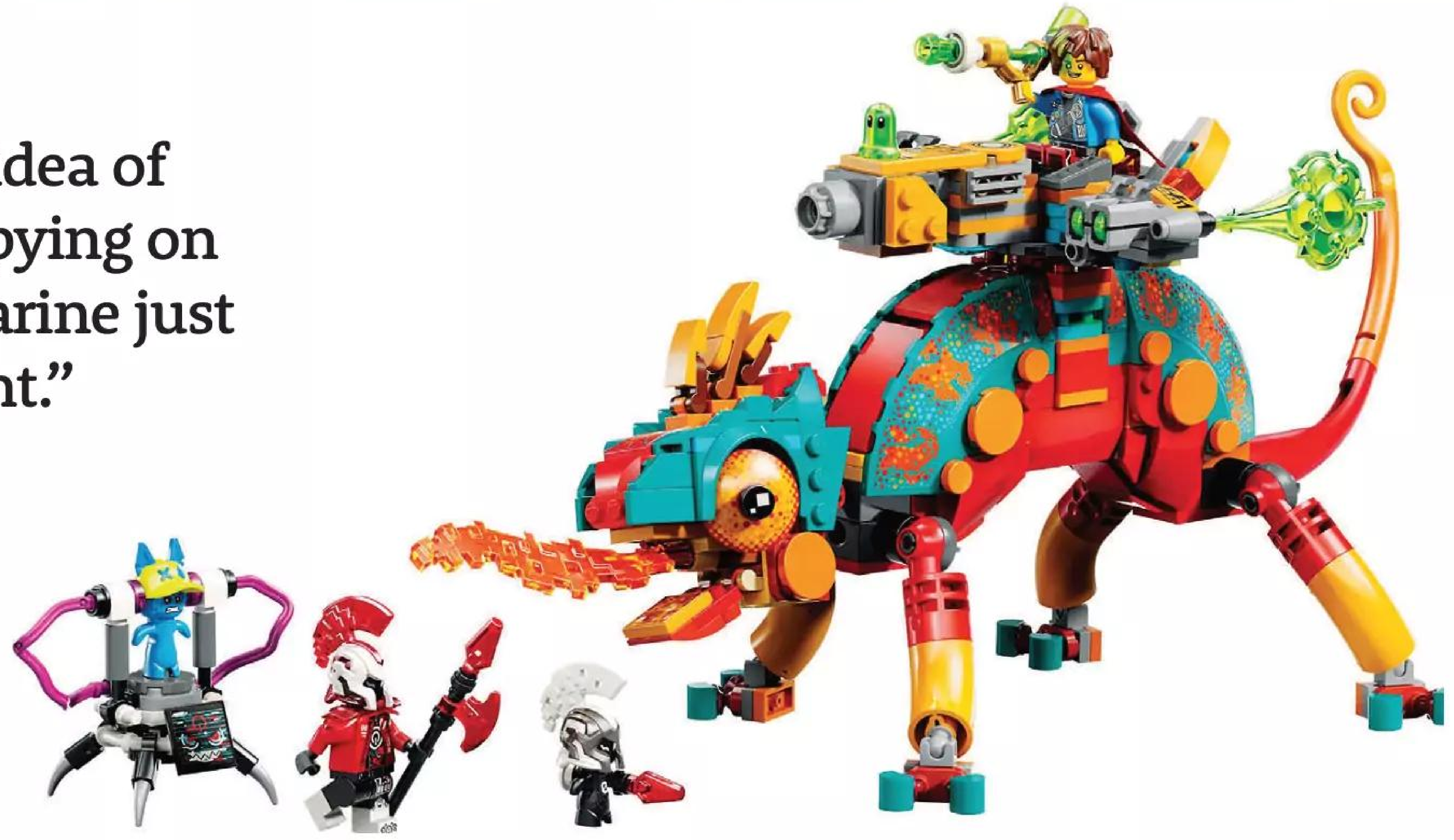
"What I can tease is that we're going more into the fantasy realm again and bringing that vibe back." ■







> “This whole idea of scouting and spying on stuff in a submarine just felt so right.”



Top left: Matt’s concept for the shark submarine.

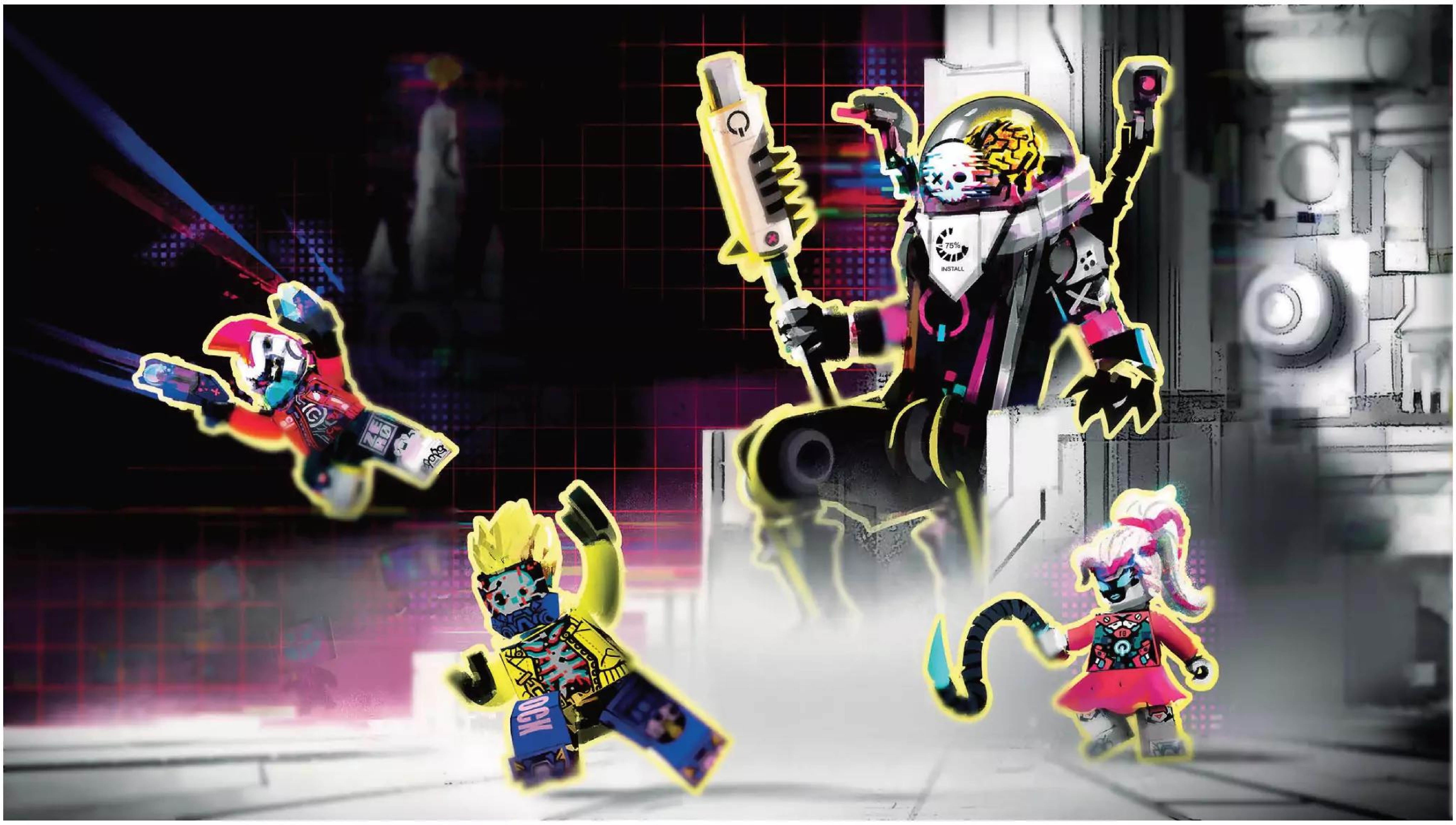
Top centre: 71500 Nightmare Shark Submarine.

Above: This concept art suggests how the chameleon could look in action.

Left: 71492 Mateo’s Fire Chameleon.

Below left: Different concepts for the Cyber Brain characters.

Below: The lineup for the Nightmare team.



Wicket the Ewok

Yub nub! The smallest hero in the galaxy is even smaller in this mini rendition of the Forest Moon's most famous son

Ewoks may be small, but this build makes them even tinier. 75430 Wicket the Ewok captures one of Star Wars' most beloved creatures in brick form, delivering the character's charm and personality.

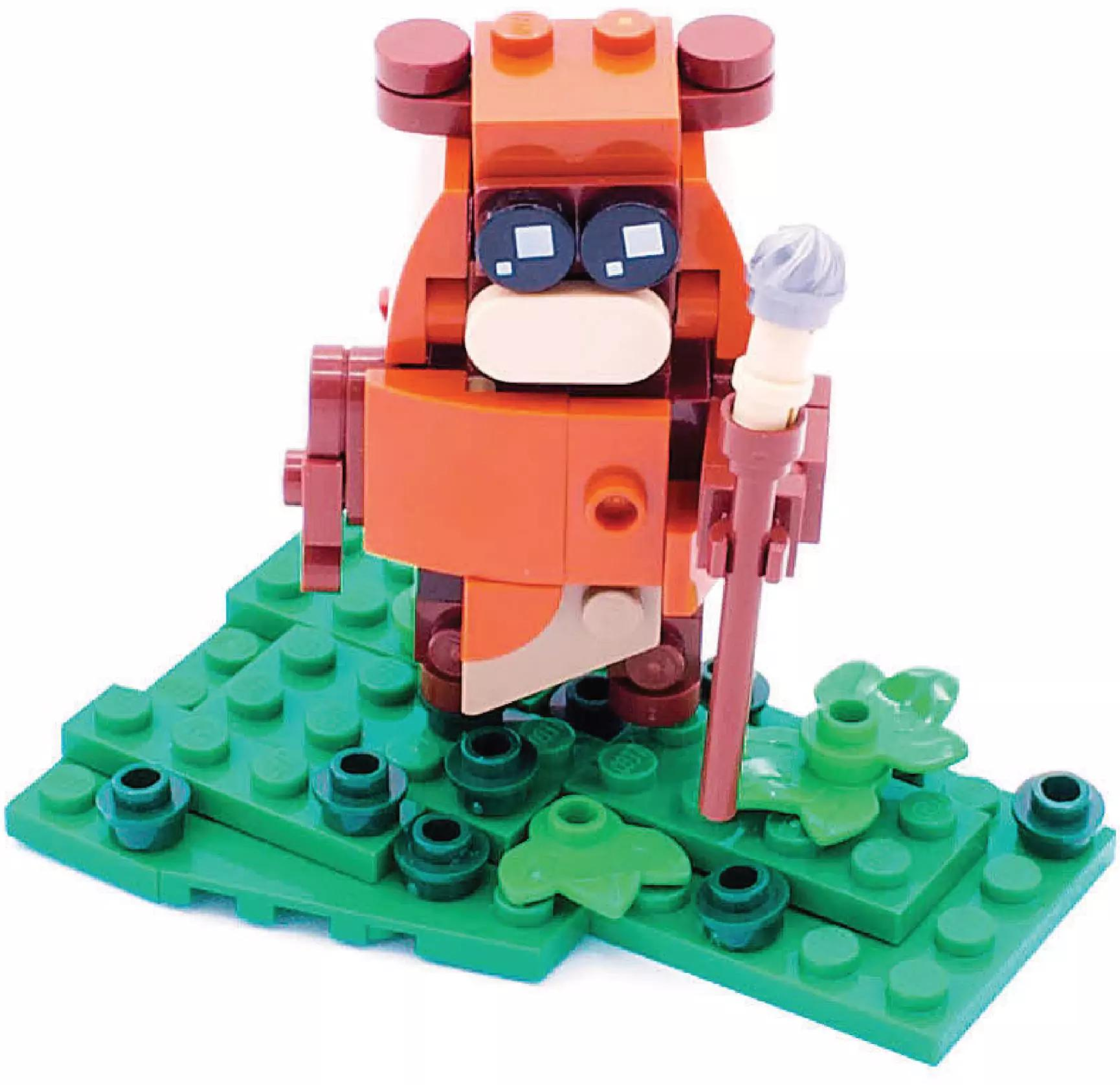
Translating him into miniature form offers the chance to celebrate that same spirit in a smaller, bookshelf-friendly build. The goal is to preserve his recognisable silhouette while evoking the mischievous personality that has made him a fan favourite since the release of Star Wars: Return of the Jedi in 1983.

Constructing an organic figure like Wicket at such a small scale is no simple task. It is vital to capture a distinctive trait which will make it instantly recognizable. The ears use curved tile elements to achieve a gentle and accurate taper. Their placement immediately gives the build life and character.

Subtle shaping around the head and hood helps to reinforce the sense of fur without overwhelming the model, while carefully chosen reddish brown and dark orange colour placement keeps everything cohesive.

This build naturally invites expansion. Other Ewoks such as Paploo, Logray, Chief Chirpa and Teebo would all translate beautifully into this scale, each with distinctive markings and colourings that would add variety to a display. Because of the small scale, you could build a whole Ewok village with trees, huts and bridges. You could have an entire tribe that captures the whimsy and warmth of Star Wars' forest moon.

WILL TACHICK



Get the parts list: blocksmag.com/goto/wicket

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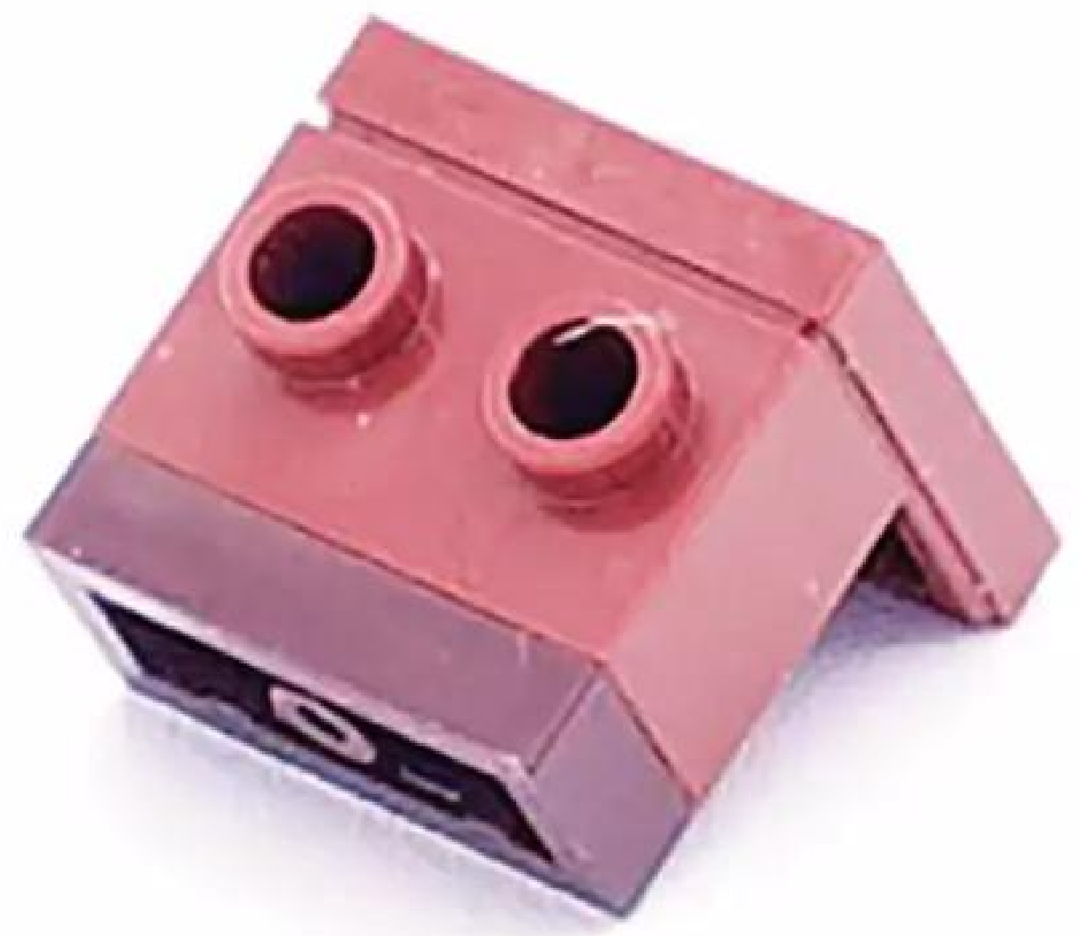

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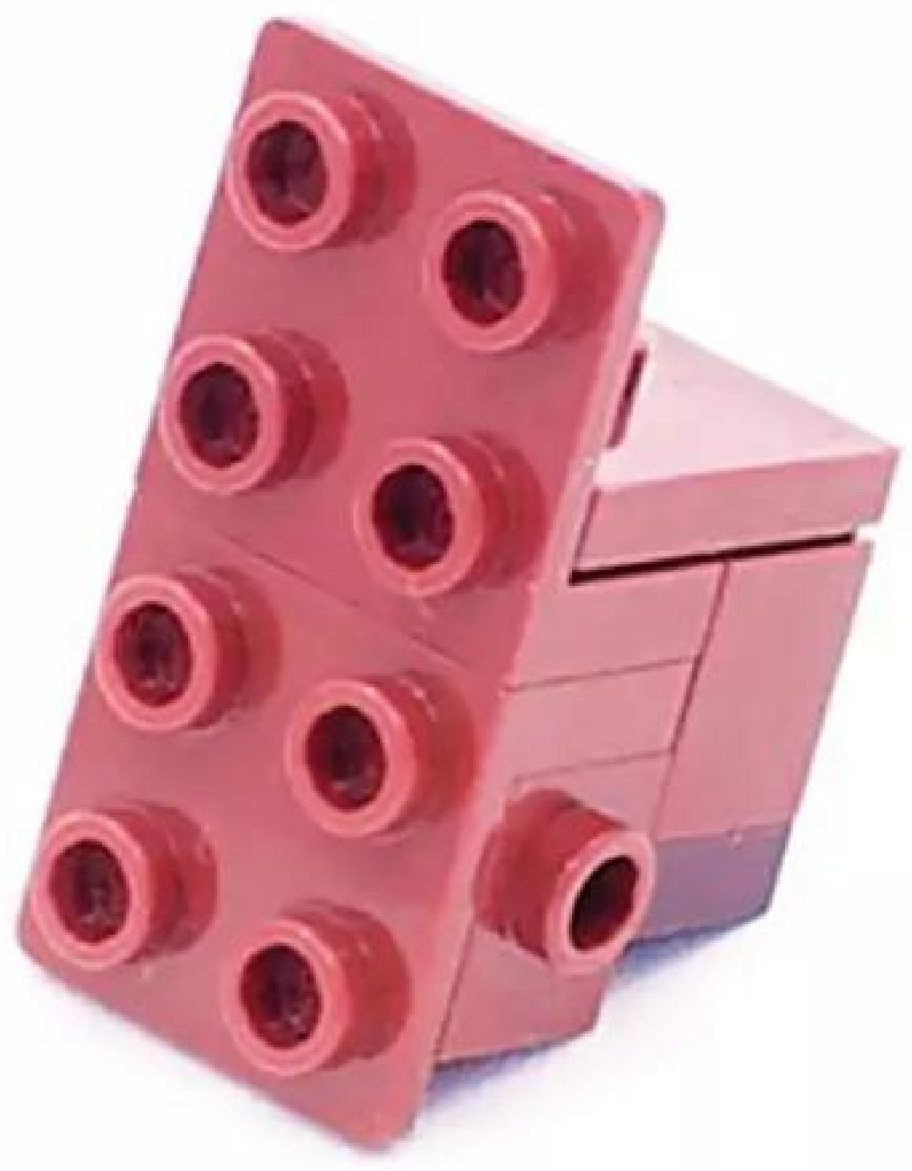

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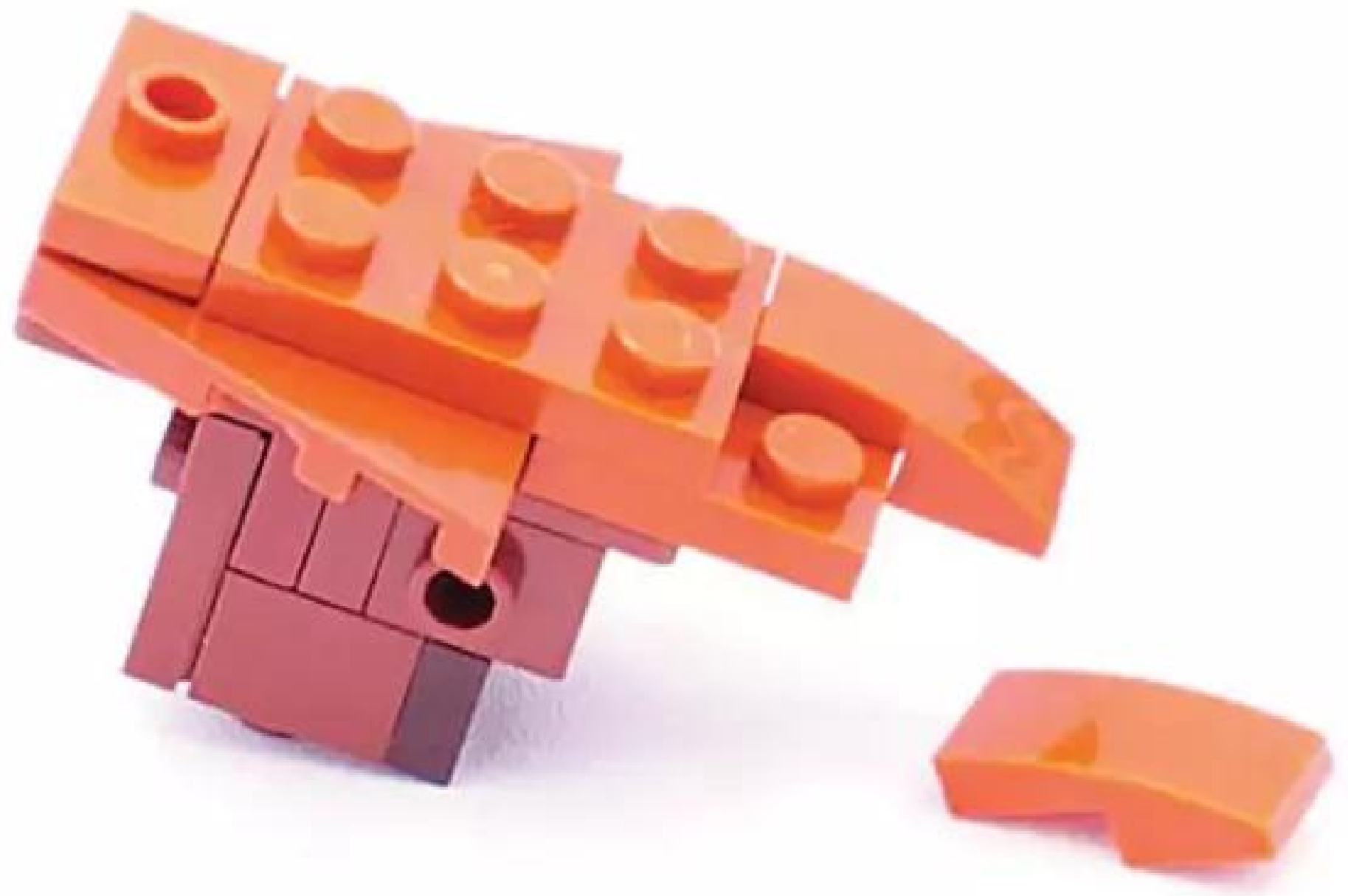

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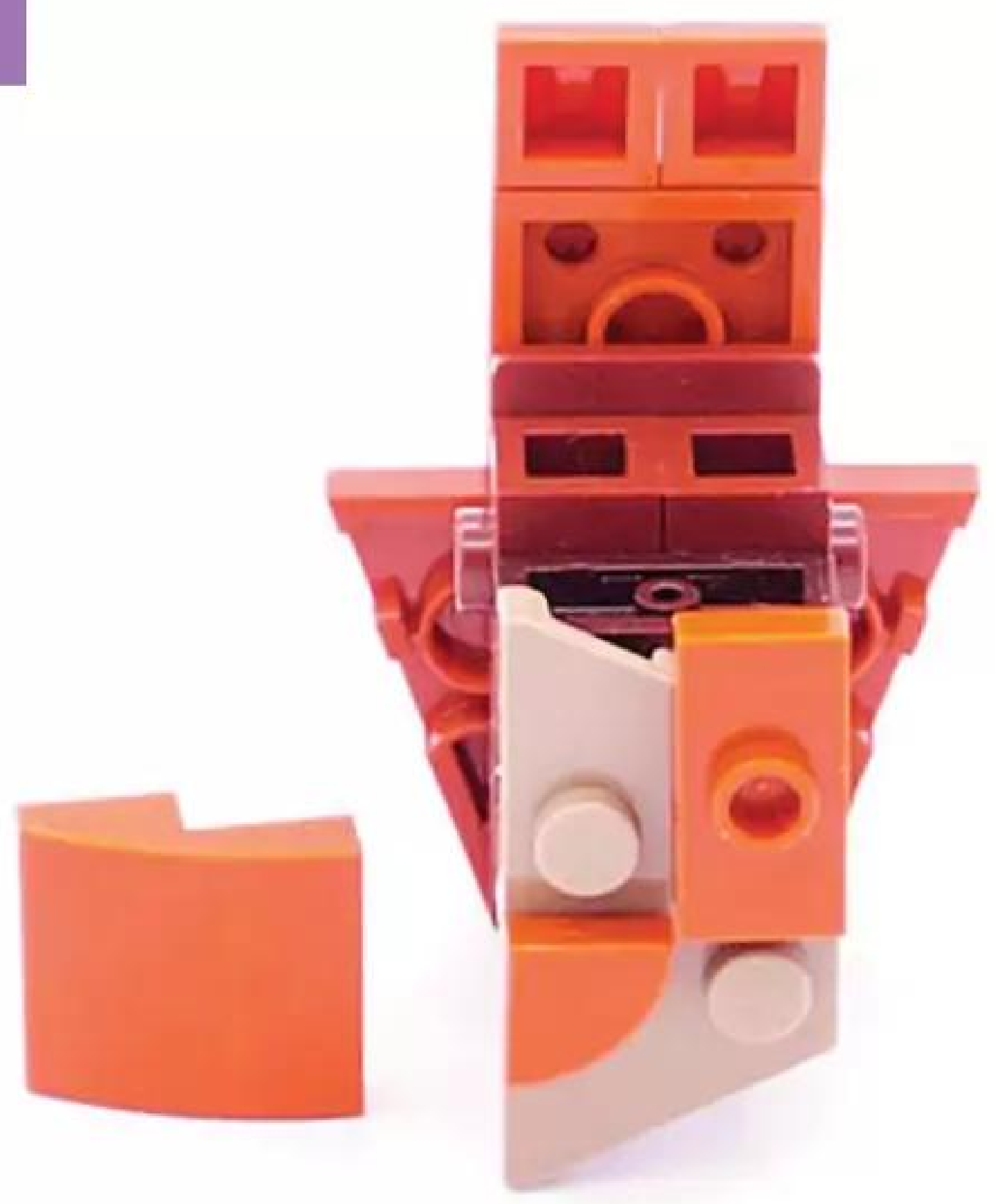

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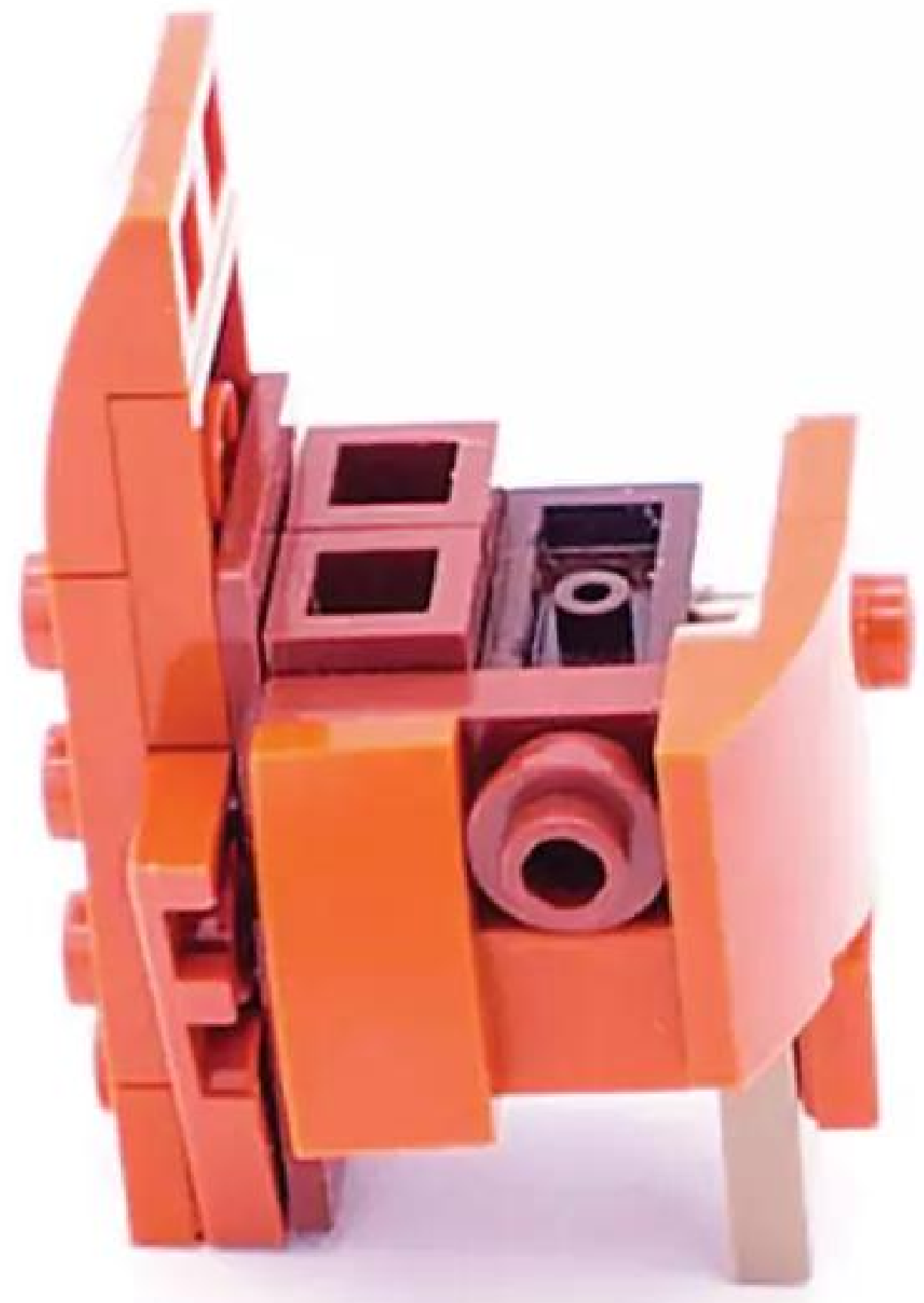

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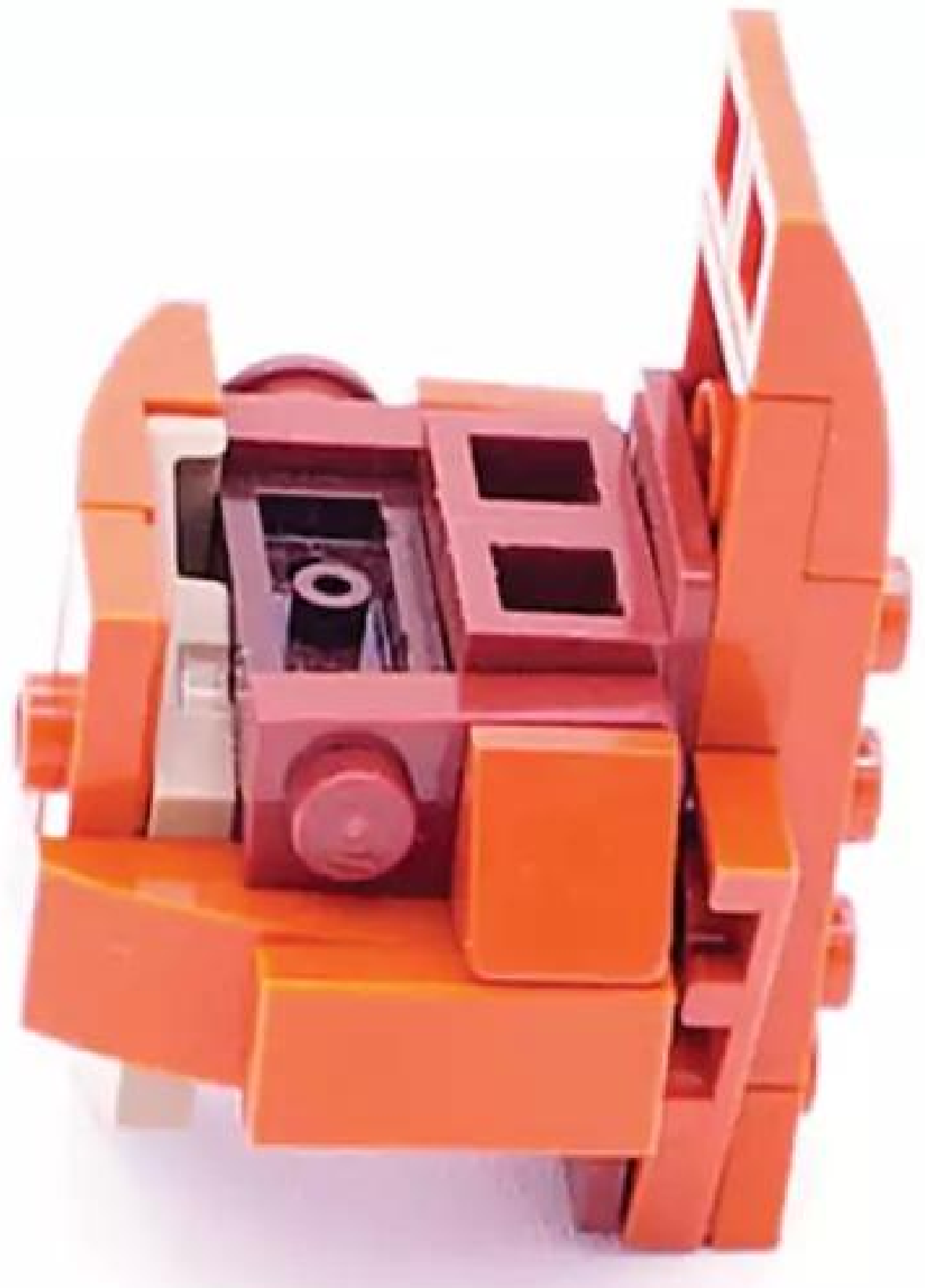

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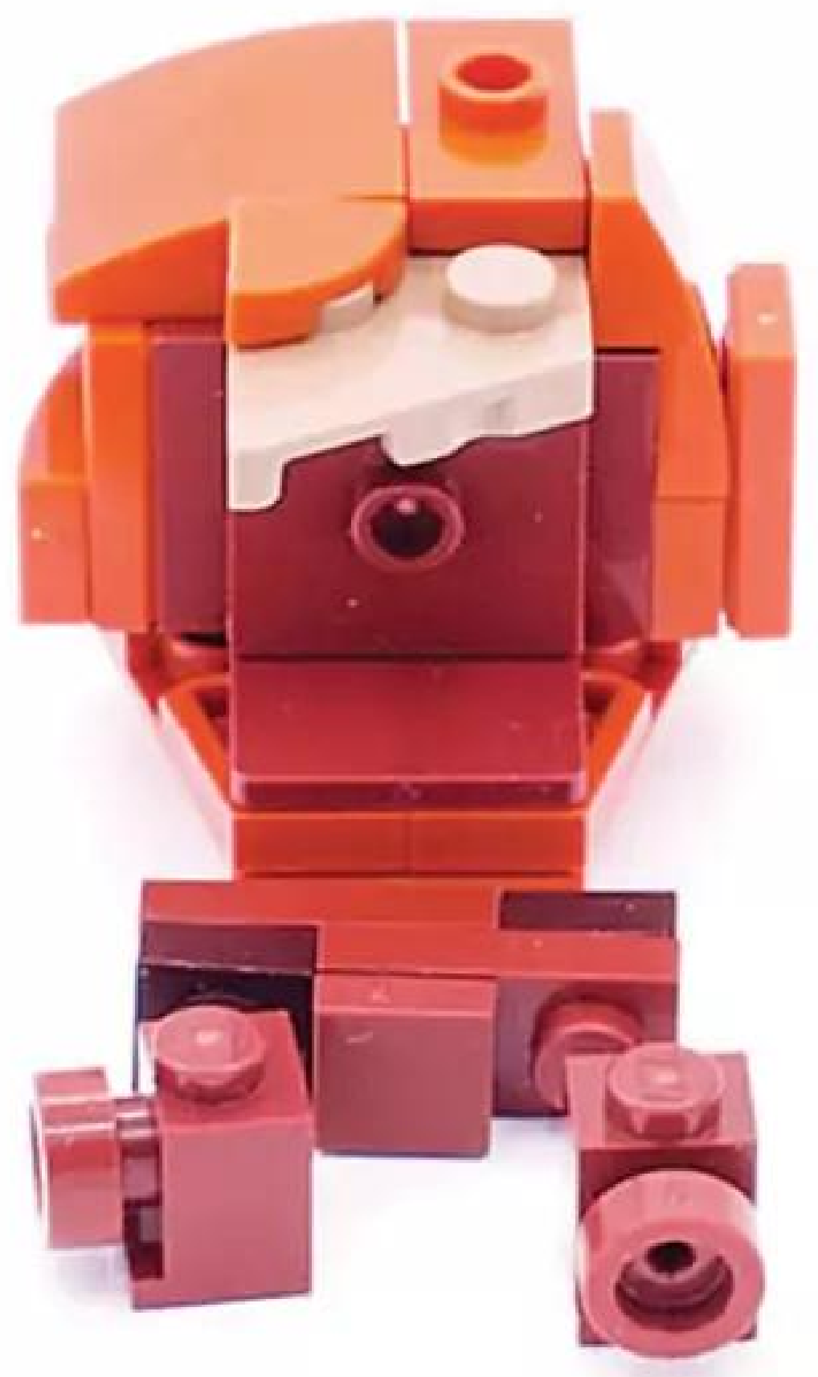

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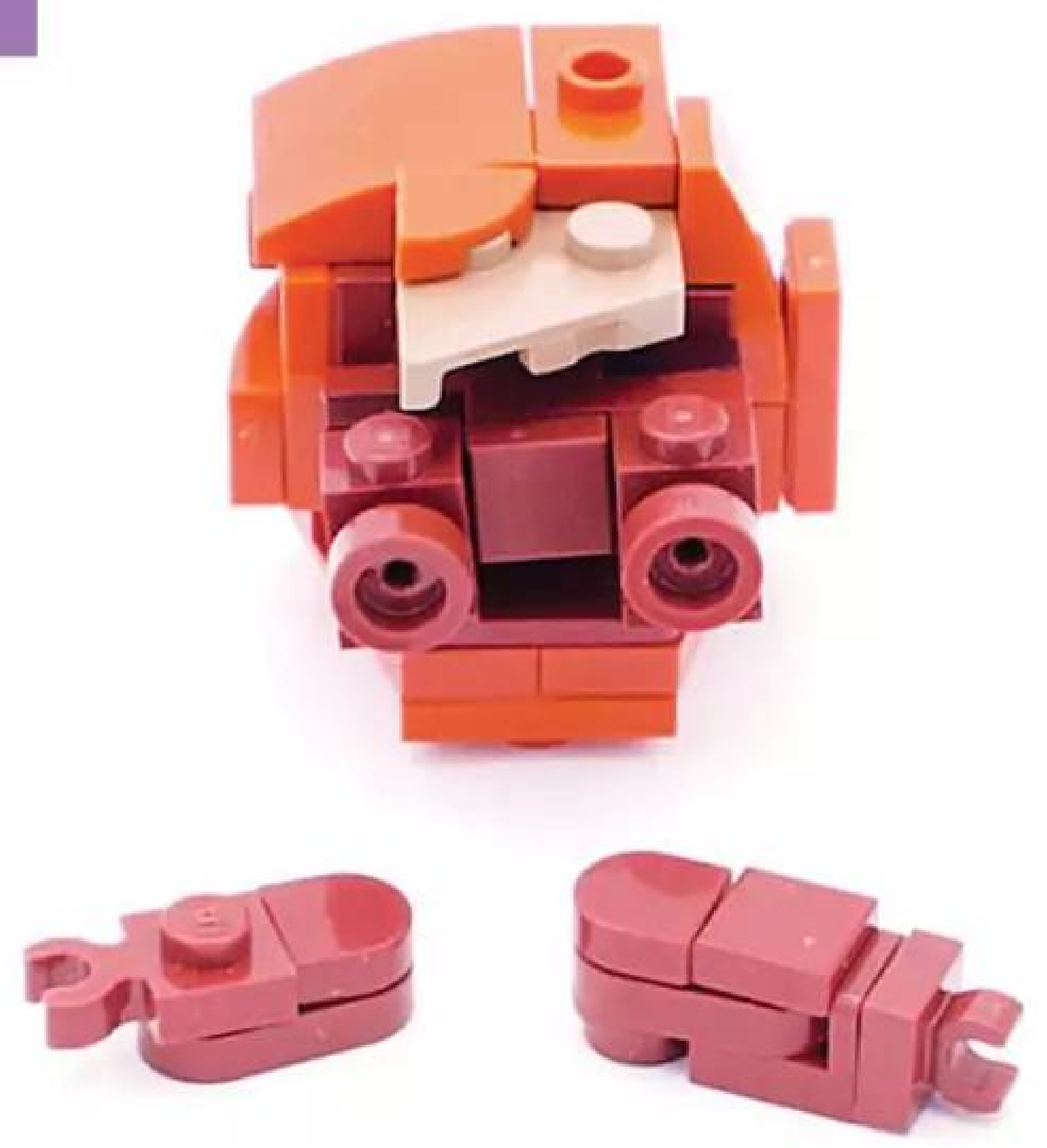

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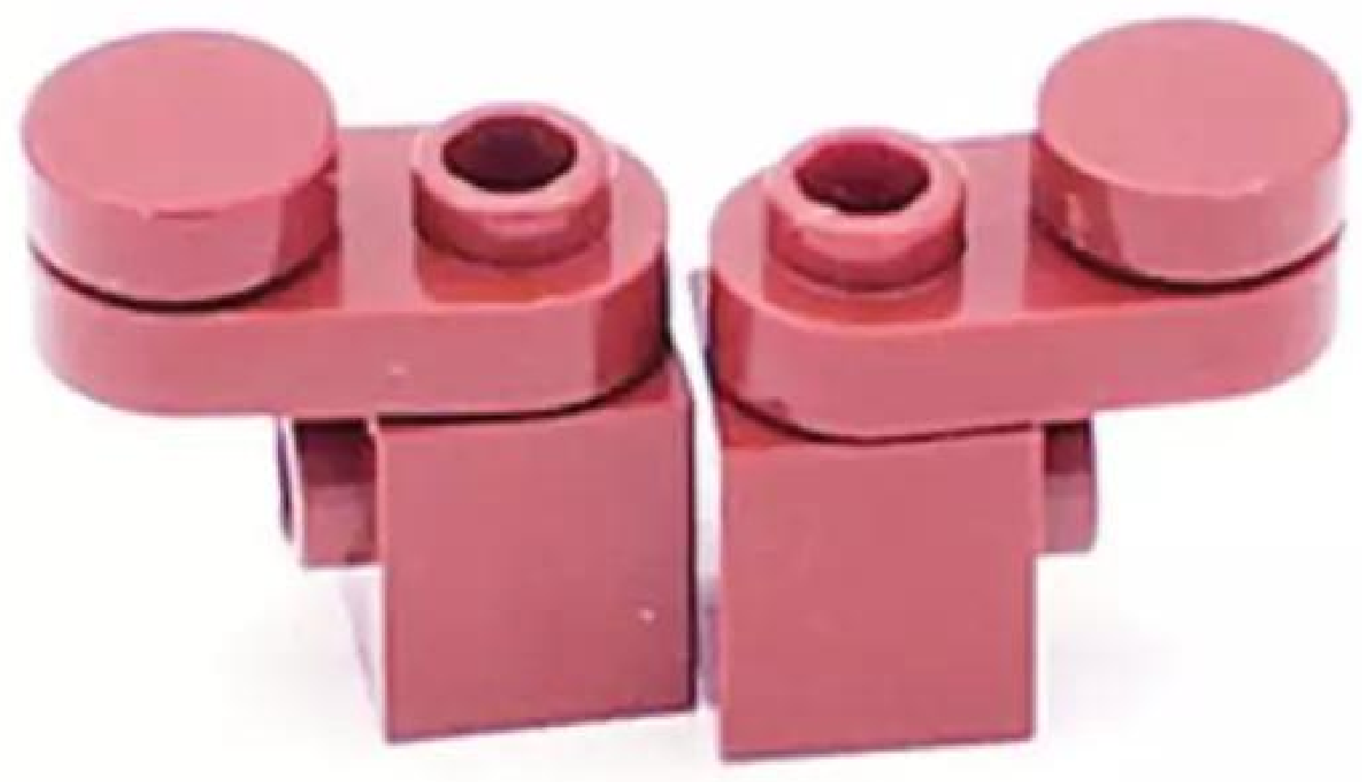

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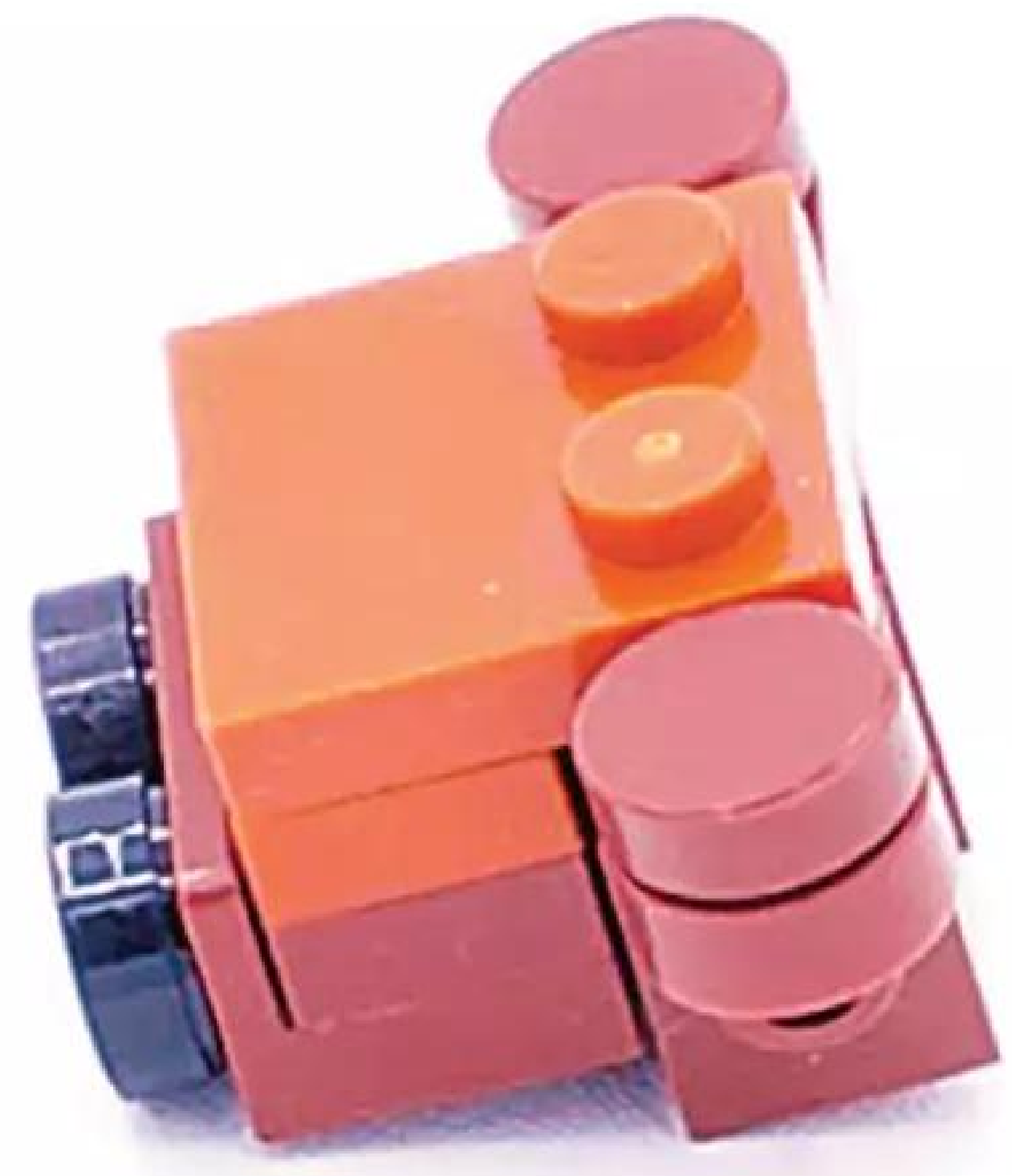

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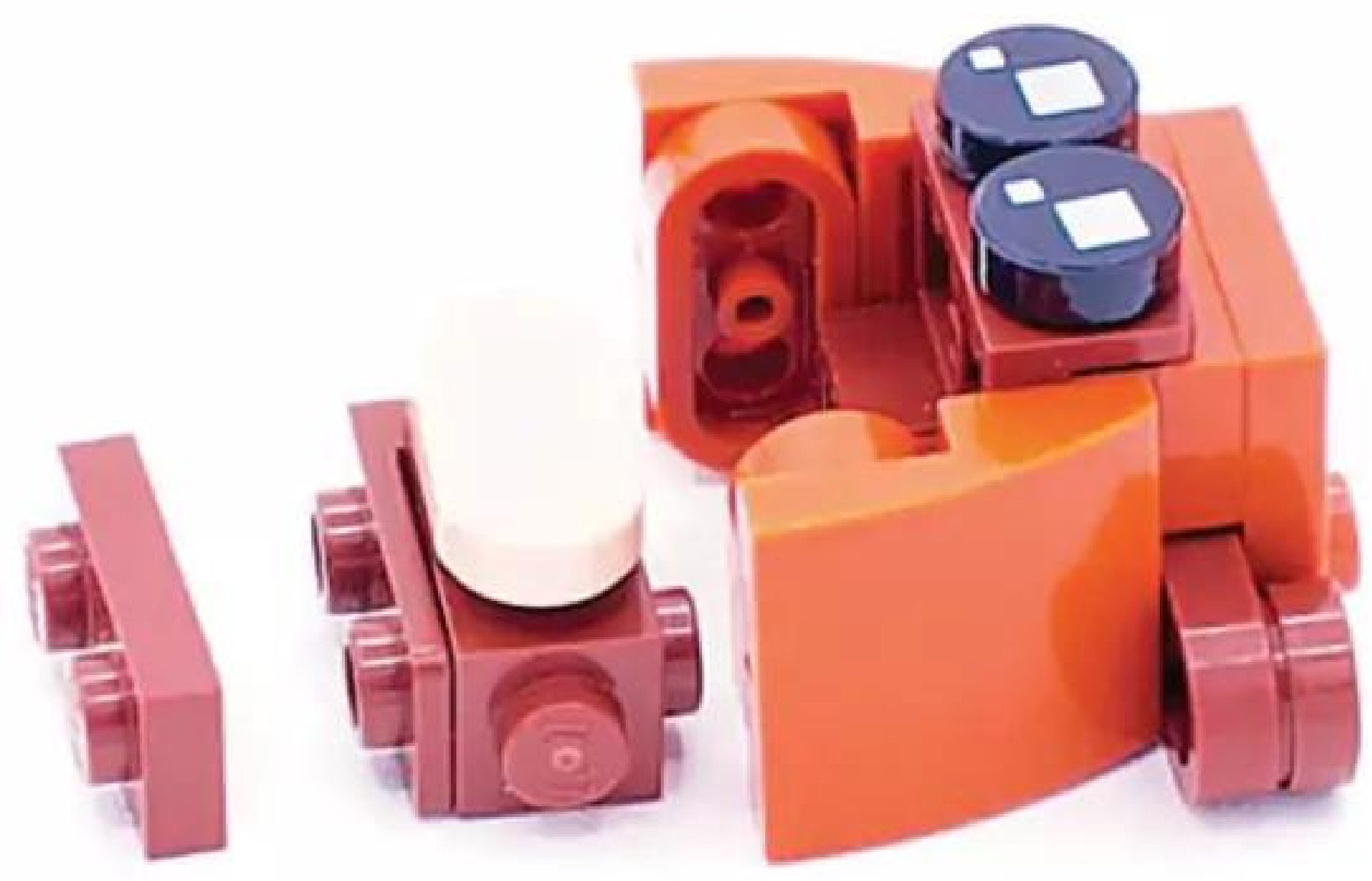

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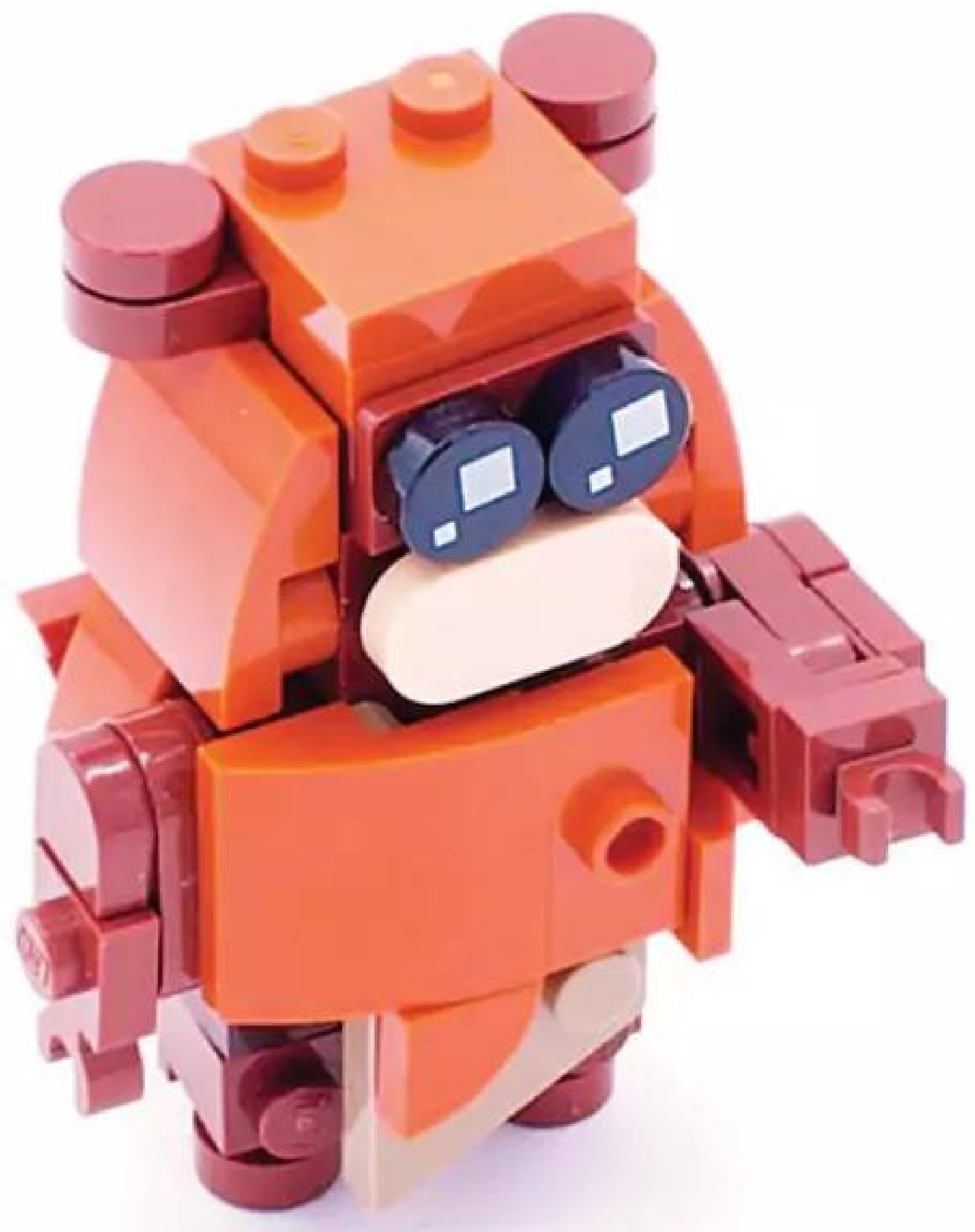


HOW THE INTERNET BROUGHT LEGO FANS TOGETHER

Matt Chiles goes back to the early days of the internet, when LEGO fans first had the opportunity to find each other no matter where in the world they were. He recalls what it was like to trade bricks in the days before online platforms and the first websites that proved integral to the fan experience

***Words:** Matt Chiles*

In the spring of 1993, I was in my senior year at Seattle Pacific University. I had 8062 Technic Backhoe underneath my dorm room bed to keep me busy when I got bored and I was known to bring in new LEGO Space sets from time to time to build with my dormmates. I was primarily a Space collector and 1993 was the year that Ice Planet came out. I was the only serious LEGO fan I knew.

On the computing front I was running Windows 3.1 on an imposing 486-50 tower. The computer nerds across the hall who had something called a modem mentioned to me that there was a newsgroup group dedicated to the LEGO hobby called alt.toys.lego (or ATL). This newsgroup was actually the very first group in the alt.toys hierarchy, thus proving early on that LEGO bricks are the king of toys.

However, it wasn't until a year later when I was in graduate school at the University of Washington that I found someone to walk me through the complex process of getting onto a newsgroup. By now a new group had just come on the scene, rec.toys.lego (RTL). The 'rec' groups had to be voted on to be created, whereas anyone could create an 'alt' group, which gave 'rec' groups an extra bit of credibility in the nascent days of the internet.

After dialling in on my new 14.4 KB modem in February 1994, I was able to access this new group that had only been created a month or so earlier. There were already a couple of hundred users on RTL, but only a few dozen really active users. Imagine the joy of thinking you are the only adult LEGO collector in the whole world and suddenly you find that you are not alone! It was an instant community.

BUILDING A COMMUNITY

RTL was a text-based newsgroup, similar to an email mailing list. You could post a message to it in a process similar to writing an email message. Someone could reply to your message as they would to an email. Anyone could download and read the messages, which were posted on a server and copied through the system to other servers. The servers were mostly hosted at universities and large businesses, so if you were a student or worked for one of these institutions you had relatively easy access.

Much to the detriment of my university studies, I quickly found out what I already knew – the LEGO hobby is much more fun than graduate work in Urban Design and Planning. I ended up dropping out of school to pursue a real job and marriage, but I kept my university email and login so that I could continue in the brick world. It was expensive – at that point the logistics involved using a phone line to dial in long distance at 10 cents per minute. You couldn't even download messages, so I had to stay logged in while I read and responded to the group.

In those early days of the community, one of our first tasks was to figure out the LEGO sets that were actually out there. I had previously started an Excel spreadsheet to keep track of my LEGO Space sets and it quickly grew to include every set I could find in my collection of catalogues. It was briefly a go-to source in our little community. Other people had similar lists or spreadsheets, such as Huw Millington, who focused on promotional sets back then, and Jeff Crites, who maintained an exhaustive list of Castle sets.

We had to come up with a term for ourselves. By mid-1995, the term 'AFOL' (Adult Fan of LEGO) was starting to stick. The only real alternative was 'ALF' (Adult LEGO Fan), but we were still within 10 years of the 1980s sitcom about the Alien Life Form – so it didn't fly (no-one younger than 40 remembers the television show anymore, so we could probably get away with ALF today).

RTL was a community where things happened. Back in 1994 I proposed that we should get together for a convention. Nothing happened immediately, but eventually some people did put on the first BrickFest event in Washington DC. The community was a place where people like Abner Finley, who worked at the LEGO Store at the time, could keep us up on LEGO news that was public. There were mysterious posters like AceMaze, who would share news that was not public but would inevitably turn out to be true.

People would debate the merits of various new and older LEGO themes and sets, people would review new sets, people would answer questions for the newbies. There were posts about sales and deals, there were off topic posts where people would jump in to help with computer problems or could discuss personal problems they were going through. There were posts about where new sets were showing up. It was a vibrant community.

New train clubs formed, notably the Greater Midwest Lego Train Club and the Pacific Northwest LEGO Train Club. These were the first LEGO User Groups and they started showing off at model railroad shows. It turned out that there were a lot of us and because of that we didn't need to be so shy about buying LEGO sets in public – we could start sharing our creativity with others outside of our community.

BUYING, SELLING, TRADING

A big thing on RTL from the beginning was the buying, selling and trading of LEGO sets and bricks. Although I started lurking in early 1994, my first recorded post to RTL was on August 14, 1994. It was a request for four Space sets that I knew I was missing. Through various connections made over the next several years in RTL, not only did I get the sets I needed but I also acquired most of the other Space sets that other collectors were discovering.

Other early sellers included Todd Lehman, who was a Space collector like myself. I had a spare partial 6930 Space Command Centre and he very much needed it. Even though mine didn't have vehicles and was in poor condition, we worked out a deal and I shipped the set across the country. That was probably my first online deal and it involved some phone calling, too. I also sent Todd photocopies of some Space instructions I had – these were valuable things at the time! Little trades and sales like this were the only hope for any of us to get a missing set.

Todd was also the first person to start auctioning LEGO sets online. He was auctioning some McDonalds promotional sets in February 1994. His auctions evolved into large piece auctions that he called Auczilla that used interactive software to automatically read your emailed bids. These auctions were advertised entirely on RTL, which was the only community that existed. In one of his early moves, he bought a dozen copies of set 6020 Magic Shop and parted it out. One of his lots was a 'Mighty Oak Tree' with multiple trunk and branch pieces. But the real treasure was just being able to buy 20 or 30 of one particular piece – this was new and novel.

In the meantime, some others started selling sets by auction. When I found old sets I would buy them – my first auction sale was in August 1994, when I sold some Castle minifigure packs that I had come across. I remember there was a couple who were engaged, Eric Pilcher and Jodi Faulkner, who travelled around the southern US and bought many old Castle and Pirate sets from small retail stores. They auctioned them on RTL and financed their wedding with the proceeds!

918
LEGO
LL 918

On another occasion, Robin Sather held some auctions from a vast number of mostly used boxed sets he came across at a garage sale in Vancouver, Canada. I got one of my white whales, 918 Space Transport, in a box from him. Robin is now a LEGO Certified Professional running Brickville Designworks in Vancouver, Canada.

In the late 1990s, we were making contacts all over the world on RTL. I ended up getting in touch with Rufus Stuever in Germany who had access to many new and used LEGO sets. He would send me sets, I would sell them on my email auctions via RTL and take a commission. Simon Denscombe in the UK became a similar contact, as did others in Austria, Australia, Canada, Japan and elsewhere. I would sometimes buy collections or sets from people who were offering them for sale. AFOLs were sending money and sets around the globe to people who we had really never met and of the hundreds of transactions that I made, only a couple went poorly.

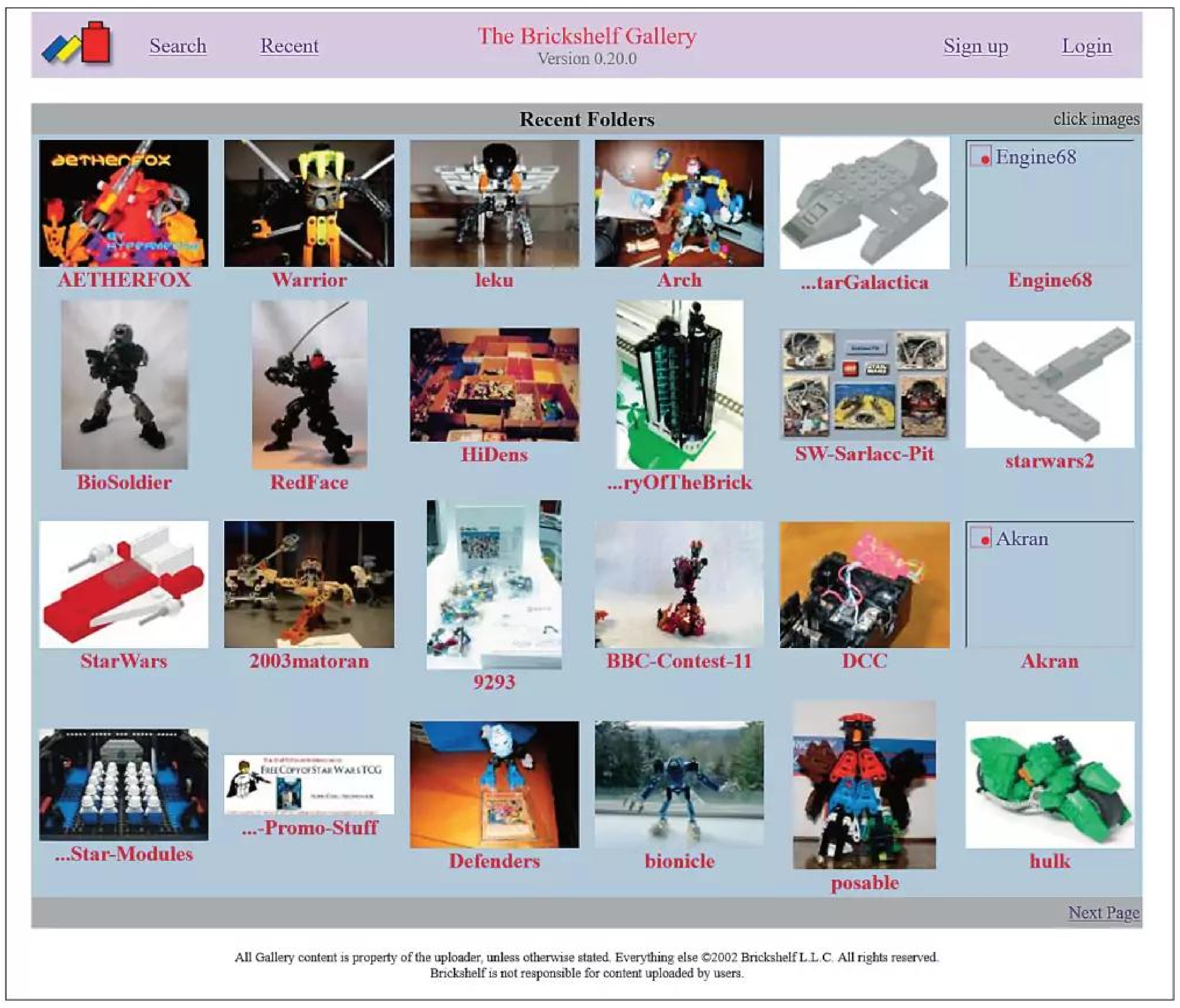
WORLD WIDE WEB

In about 1995 this new thing called the World Wide Web started to form. On the World Wide Web, you could easily post pictures of things. Anyone could create a website. I bought a book that taught HTML in a week and put 'Matt's LEGO Set List' online for the first time. It stayed up for a number

Far left: *Matt Chiles is a life-long LEGO fan who has seen the community grow and evolve.*

Above: *918 Space Transport.*

Left: *The only way to access the internet in the early 1990s was via a PC.*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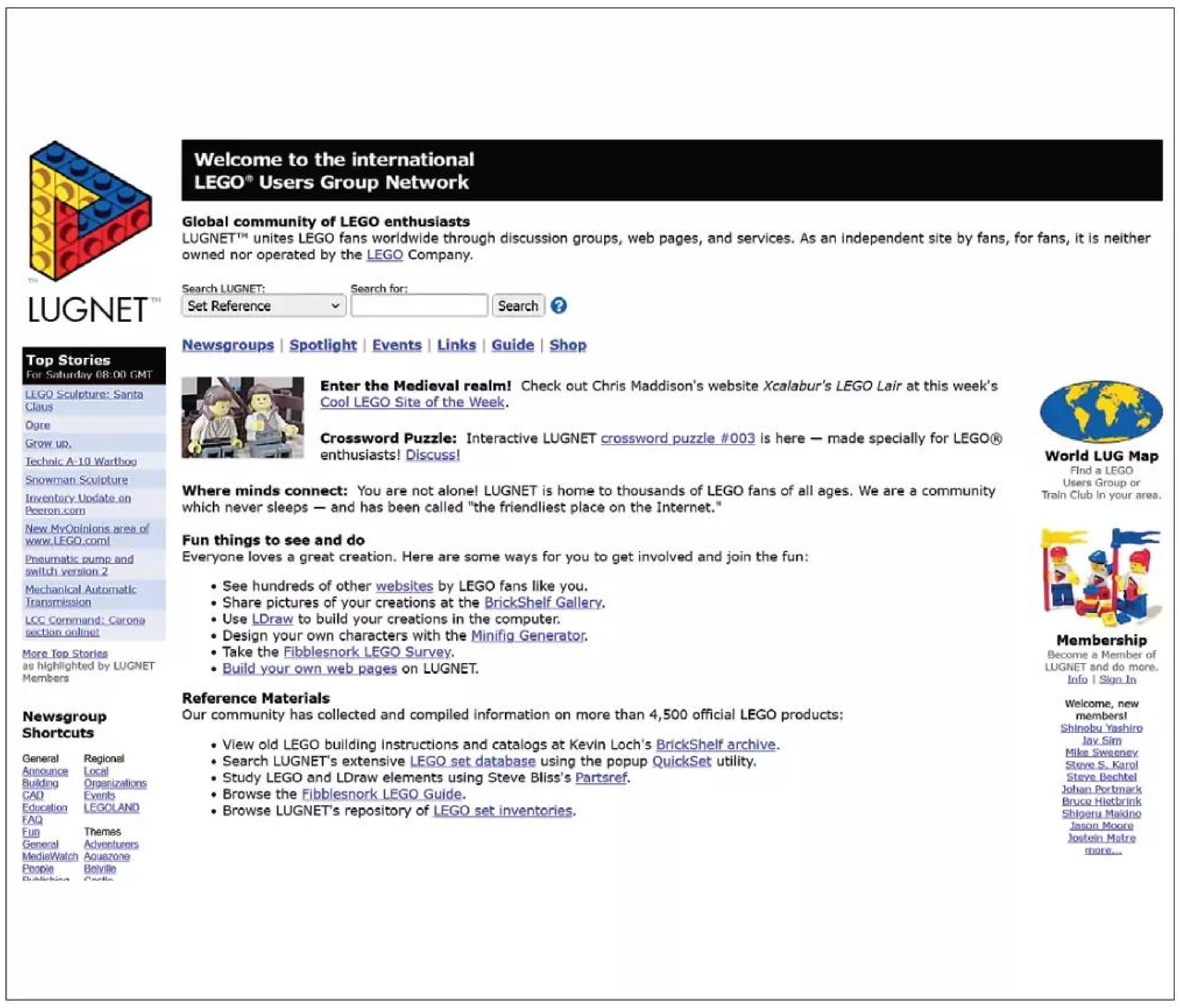
LUGNET™
Top Stories
For Saturday 08:00 GMT
LEGO Sculpture: Santa Claus
Ogre
Grow up.
Technic A-10 Warthog
Snowman Sculpture
Inventory Update on Peeron.com
New MyOpinions area of www.LEGO.com!
Pneumatic pump and switch version 2
Mechanical Automatic Transmission
LCC Command: Carona section online!
More Top Stories
as highlighted by LUGNET Members
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World LUG Map
Find a LEGO Users Group or Train Club in your area.
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Welcome, new members!
Shinobu Yashiro
Jay Sim
Mike Sweeney
Steve S. Karol
Steve Bechtel
Johan Portmark
Bruce Hietbrink
Shigeru Makino
Jason Moore
Jostein Matre
more...

Welcome to the international LEGO® Users Group Network

Global community of LEGO enthusiasts
LUGNET™ unites LEGO fans worldwide through discussion groups, web pages, and services. As an independent site by fans, for fans, it is neither owned nor operated by the LEGO Company.

Enter the Medieval realm! Check out Chris Maddison's website *Xcalabur's LEGO Lair* at this week's Cool LEGO Site of the Week.

Crossword Puzzle: Interactive LUGNET crossword puzzle #003 is here — made specially for LEGO® enthusiasts! Discuss!

Where minds connect: You are not alone! LUGNET is home to thousands of LEGO fans of all ages. We are a community which never sleeps — and has been called "the friendliest place on the Internet."

Fun things to see and do
Everyone loves a great creation. Here are some ways for you to get involved and join the fun:

- See hundreds of other websites by LEGO fans like you.
- Share pictures of your creations at the BrickShelf Gallery.
- Use LDraw to build your creations in the computer.
- Design your own characters with the Minifig Generator.
- Take the Fibblesnork LEGO Survey.
- Build your own web pages on LUGNET.

Reference Materials
Our community has collected and compiled information on more than 4,500 official LEGO products:

- View old LEGO building instructions and catalogs at Kevin Loch's BrickShelf archive.
- Search LUGNET's extensive LEGO set database using the popup QuickSet utility.
- Study LEGO and LDraw elements using Steve Bliss's Partsref.
- Browse the Fibblesnork LEGO Guide.
- Browse LUGNET's repository of LEGO set inventories.

of years, but Huw did a much better job of updating set lists – his website, Brickset.com, is of course still the go-to site for keeping track of your collection.

Besides a need for a list of sets, there was a need for a list of parts that came in sets. Dan Boger and Jennifer Finch filled that need in 1998 by starting Peeron.com. Dan has since passed away, but for many years Peeron was the essential place for finding out what parts were in a set or what sets included a particular part. Members of the community contributed all of the information.

The RTL community had formed quickly, but the internet was evolving even more quickly. Todd saw the need for a web-based community forum and in 1998 he and Suzanne Rich launched LUGNET (the LEGO User Group Network). Now there was a true web-based community for AFOLs and in honour of the old RTL days, Todd made sure to engineer LUGNET so that you could follow groups by email. Todd knew that at this time dial-up modems were still common – I was now running a 56K modem, but that was unbearably slow for surfing the net, especially with websites that used photos (high speed DSL phone lines didn't even become available in my rural neighbourhood until about 2002).

The community identified other needs. In 1998, Kevin Loch started Brickshelf.com. This was a place where you could post pictures and link to them from other sites such as LUGNET. It was initially a repository for instruction images and soon became the place for catalogues, brochures and – most importantly – MOCs. Kevin passed away in 2024 and hopefully Brickshelf will remain online.

Meanwhile, other sites to sell sets and pieces were still to be created. My friend Dwayne Towell started a website to sell his parts and I started insidethevault.com to sell new sets.

It would take a new service to make buying and selling LEGO sets and parts more straightforward. Until 1999, buying LEGO items meant putting a paper cheque in the mail and waiting for it to arrive with the recipient, then to clear, then for your order to be shipped – and that applied whether you were buying from eBay, a little shop like mine or a random stranger you met in a newsgroup.

In February 1999, LEGO friend Larry Pieniazek asked if I took payments by PayPal at insidethevault.com. I signed up for an account at a time when there were less than 150,000 users. But word spread like wildfire through the LEGO community – here was a way to pay without sending a paper cheque and waiting two weeks for it to clear! It wouldn't surprise me if AFOLs gave PayPal a big boost in the early days.

The many small sites dedicated to selling LEGO parts and pieces were eclipsed in size and scope by eBay in 1997. For the first few years it was absolutely free to sell on eBay and it grew by leaps and bounds. It became a preferred selling place early on and it was great for sets… but it didn't work well for pieces.

Dan Jezek saw that need and filled it with his new site, BrickBay.com, in June 2000. When Dan started it, there was initial reluctance from many sellers to move, because some of them had spent a lot of resources building up their own websites. However, new sellers and buyers without websites went to BrickBay in droves and the advantages of this shopping mall of independent stores quickly became apparent.

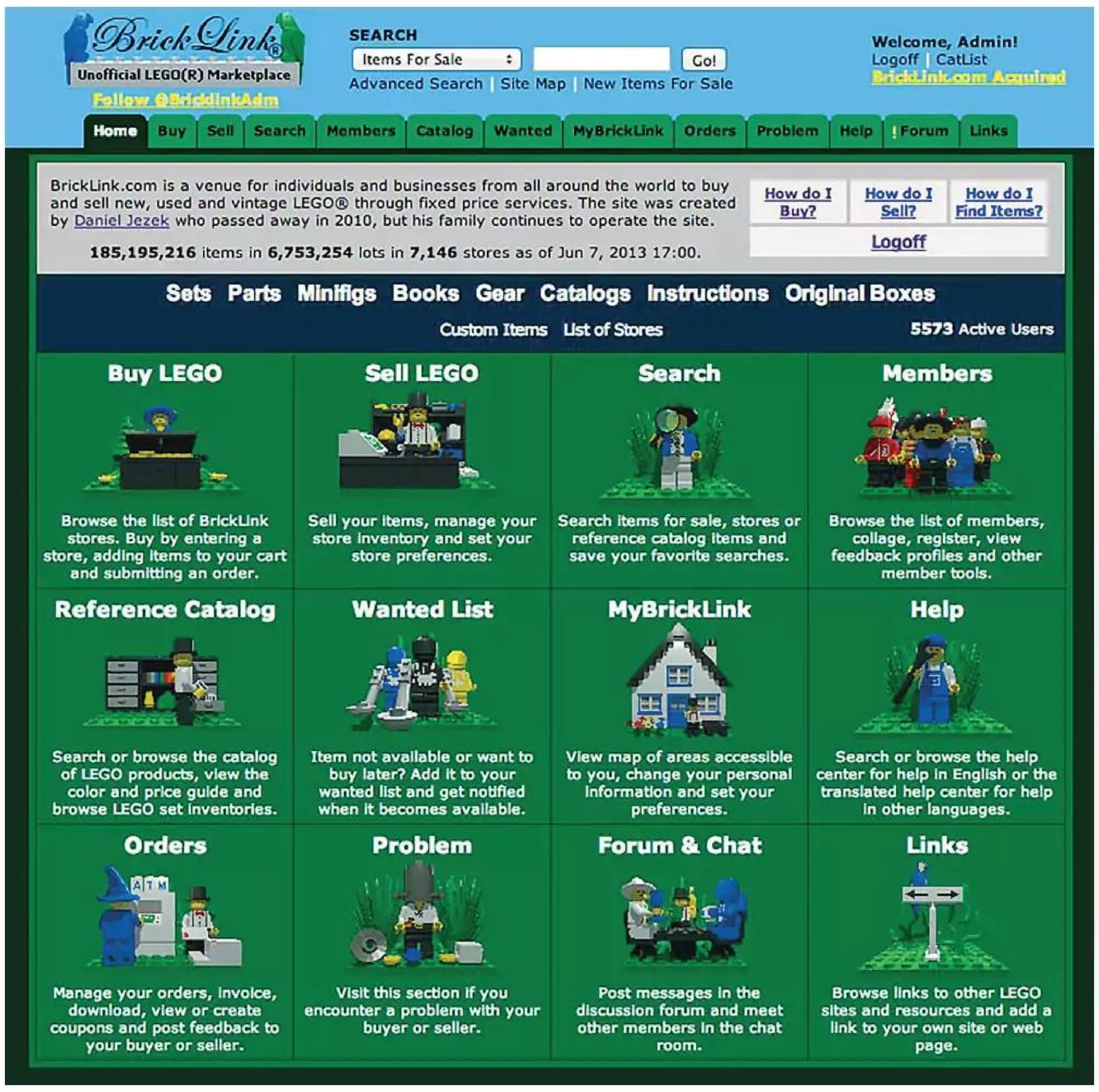
eBay ended up taking notice of BrickBay's success and requested that they change their name in 2000. After some debate Dan settled on BrickLink.com, which was a great choice as that is what the site does. It links the bricks between the buyers and the sellers.

The rest, as they say, is history. BrickLink started a library of pieces and sets out of necessity. The dedicated team of sellers at BrickLink worked hard to be completists and to keep the database up to date. The commercial motivation of their endeavour ensured their eventual success, resulting in a tool that proved great not only for anyone selling – but also for those buying and those who were just curious about a particular model's inventory.

Meanwhile, LUGNET grew to the point that it started to break apart, as separate communities such as Castle, Space and BIONICLE formed their own LUGs. From my perspective, it's a shame that LUGNET and the central community was lost. Though the LEGO world is stronger than ever with more talent, more resources and more fans than ever, there is no longer a focal point where the LEGO community can congregate. We from the LUGNET days hang out on a Facebook group and reminisce like old geezers at a funeral.

And RTL – it is dead, along with all of those old usenet groups. You can look them up Google – search for 'usenet group rec.toys.lego.' Google Groups has most RTL posts archived going back to the beginning, but due to the nature of how those posts were made, circulated and purged from old servers there are posts that may be lost.

Given that today we can pull out our phones and look up information about any set, part or minifigure within a matter of seconds, it's fun to think back to a time when you needed real dedication to explore the LEGO hobby online. It was quite the moment and it provided the foundation for everything that fans have today – including this magazine! ■


BrickLink®
Unofficial LEGO(R) Marketplace
Follow @BricklinkAdm
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Go!
Advanced Search | Site Map | New Items For Sale
Welcome, Admin!
Logoff | CatList
BrickLink.com Acquired
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List of Stores
5573 Active Users
Buy LEGO
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Wanted List
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Help
Orders
Problem
Forum & Chat
Links

BrickLink.com is a venue for individuals and businesses from all around the world to buy and sell new, used and vintage LEGO® through fixed price services. The site was created by Daniel Jezek who passed away in 2010, but his family continues to operate the site.

185,195,216 items in **6,753,254** lots in **7,146** stores as of Jun 7, 2013 17:00.

Browse the list of BrickLink stores. Buy by entering a store, adding items to your cart and submitting an order.

Sell your items, manage your store inventory and set your store preferences.

Search items for sale, stores or reference catalog items and save your favorite searches.

Browse the list of members, collage, register, view feedback profiles and other member tools.

Search or browse the catalog of LEGO products, view the color and price guide and browse LEGO set inventories.

Item not available or want to buy later? Add it to your wanted list and get notified when it becomes available.

View map of areas accessible to you, change your personal information and set your preferences.

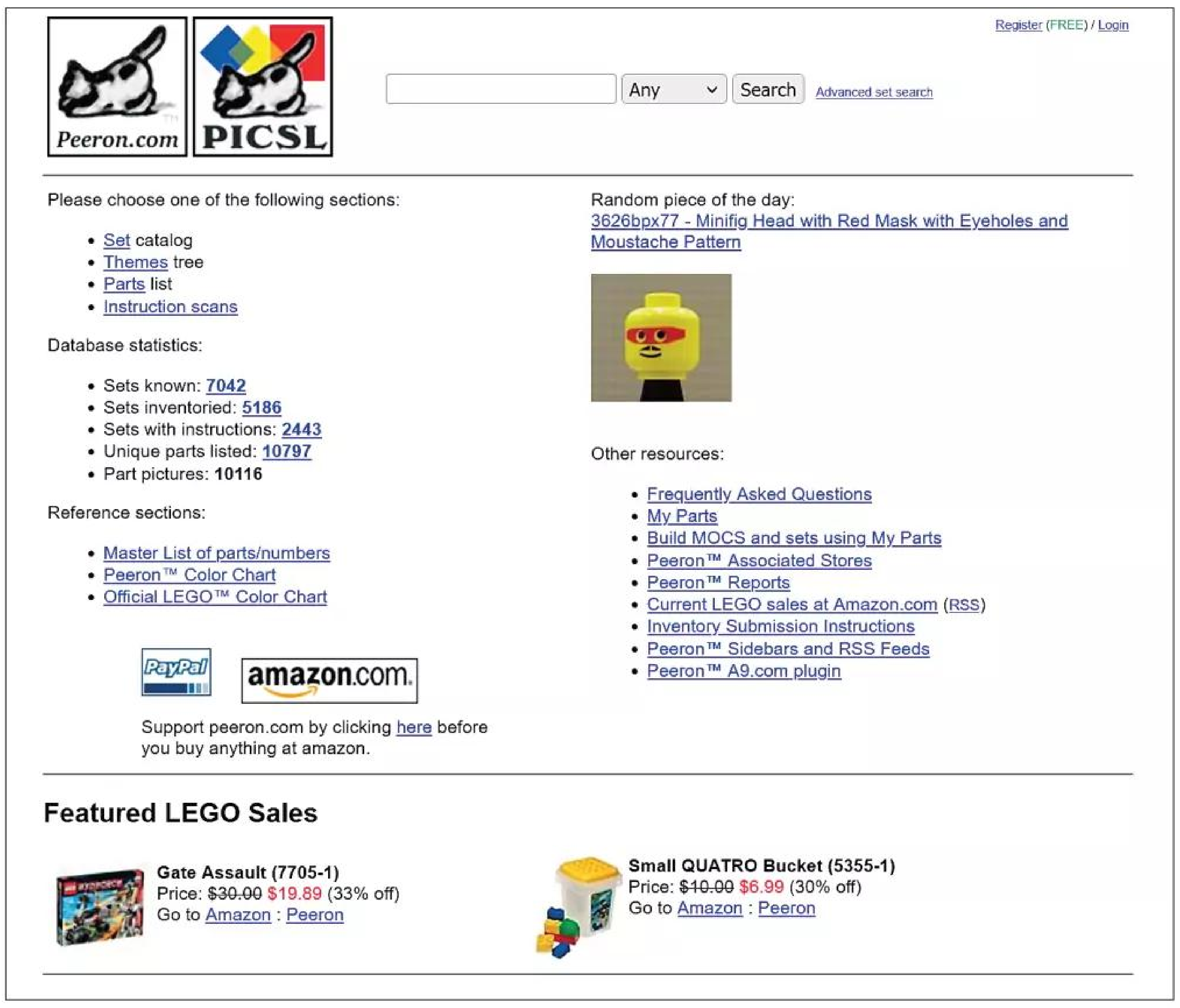
Search or browse the help center for help in English or the translated help center for help in other languages.

Manage your orders, invoice, download, view or create coupons and post feedback to your buyer or seller.

Visit this section if you encounter a problem with your buyer or seller.

Post messages in the discussion forum and meet other members in the chat room.

Browse links to other LEGO sites and resources and add a link to your own site or web page.



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Please choose one of the following sections:

- Set catalog
- Themes tree
- Parts list
- Instruction scans

Database statistics:

- Sets known: 7042
- Sets inventoried: 5186
- Sets with instructions: 2443
- Unique parts listed: 10797
- Part pictures: 10116

Reference sections:

- Master List of parts/numbers
- Peeron™ Color Chart
- Official LEGO™ Color Chart

Support peeron.com by clicking here before you buy anything at amazon.

Random piece of the day:
3626bpx77 - Minifig Head with Red Mask with Eyeholes and Moustache Pattern

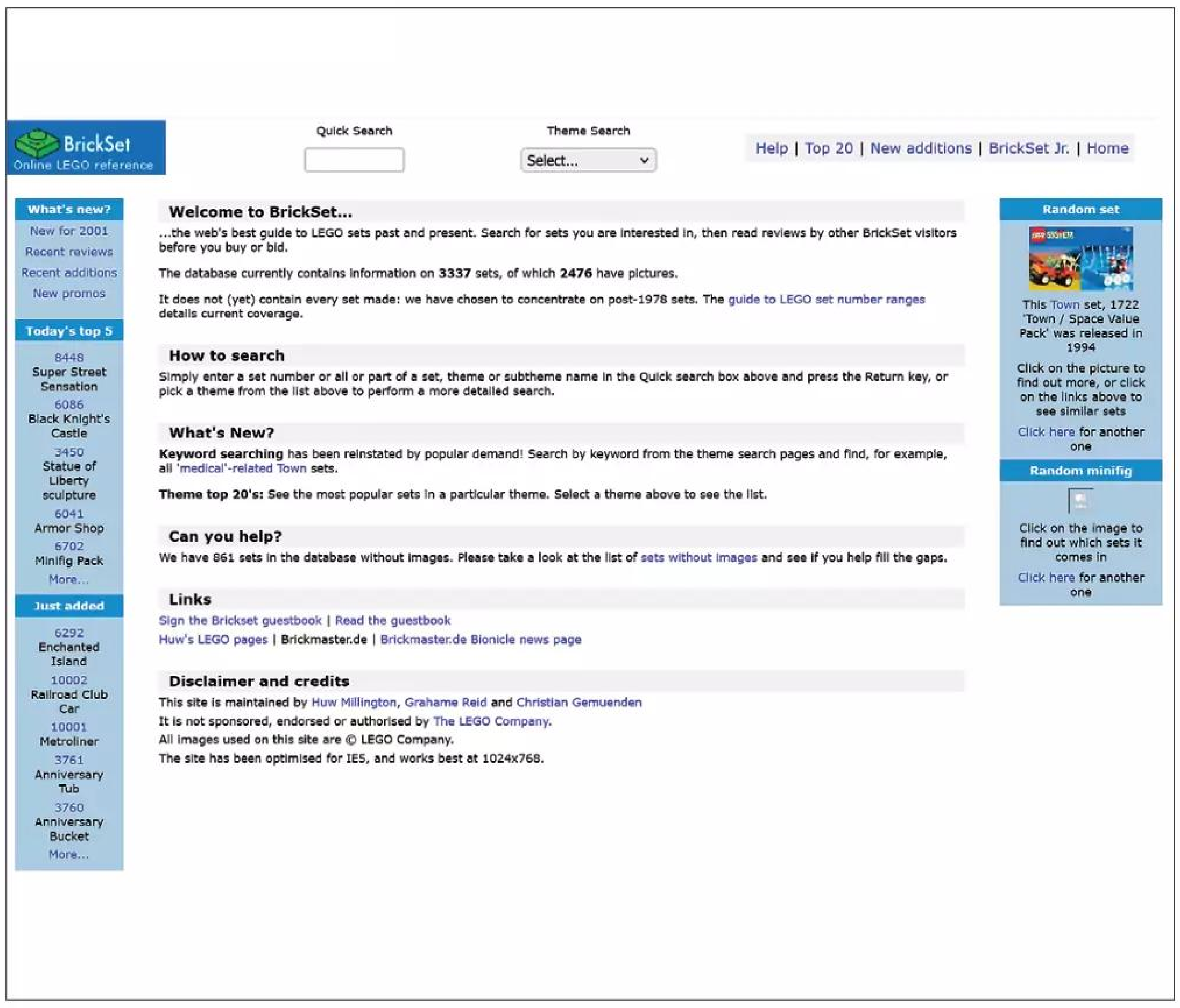
Other resources:

- Frequently Asked Questions
- My Parts
- Build MOCS and sets using My Parts
- Peeron™ Associated Stores
- Peeron™ Reports
- Current LEGO sales at Amazon.com (RSS)
- Inventory Submission Instructions
- Peeron™ Sidebars and RSS Feeds
- Peeron™ A9.com plugin

Featured LEGO Sales

Gate Assault (7705-1)
Price: ~~$30.00~~ $19.89 (33% off)
Go to Amazon : Peeron

Small QUATRO Bucket (5355-1)
Price: ~~$10.00~~ $6.99 (30% off)
Go to Amazon : Peeron



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New for 2001
Recent reviews
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Today's top 5
8448
Super Street Sensation
6086
Black Knight's Castle
3450
Statue of Liberty sculpture
6041
Armor Shop
6702
Minifig Pack
More...
Just added
6292
Enchanted Island
10002
Railroad Club Car
10001
Metroliner
3761
Anniversary Tub
3760
Anniversary Bucket
More...
Random set
Random minifig

Welcome to BrickSet...

...the web's best guide to LEGO sets past and present. Search for sets you are interested in, then read reviews by other BrickSet visitors before you buy or bid.

The database currently contains information on **3337** sets, of which **2476** have pictures.

It does not (yet) contain every set made: we have chosen to concentrate on post-1978 sets. The guide to LEGO set number ranges details current coverage.

How to search

Simply enter a set number or all or part of a set, theme or subtheme name in the Quick search box above and press the Return key, or pick a theme from the list above to perform a more detailed search.

What's New?

Keyword searching has been reinstated by popular demand! Search by keyword from the theme search pages and find, for example, all 'medical'-related Town sets.

Theme top 20's: See the most popular sets in a particular theme. Select a theme above to see the list.

Can you help?

We have 861 sets in the database without images. Please take a look at the list of sets without images and see if you help fill the gaps.

Links

Sign the Brickset guestbook | Read the guestbook
Huw's LEGO pages | Brickmaster.de | Brickmaster.de Bionicle news page

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The site has been optimised for IE5, and works best at 1024x768.

This Town set, 1722 'Town / Space Value Pack' was released in 1994

Click on the picture to find out more, or click on the links above to see similar sets

Click here for another one

Click on the image to find out which sets it comes in

Click here for another one

Top row, left to right: *Builders could share their creations on Brickshelf.*

Fans gathered to discuss the hobby on LUGNET.

Peeron had a huge database of LEGO set inventories.

Brickset has been the go-to database for 25 years.

Left: *Dan Jezek launched BrickLink to make buying and selling LEGO elements easier.*

Right: *In the 1990s, internet users waited patiently for the dial-up modems to connect.*

> "We had to come up with a term for ourselves. By mid-1995, the term 'AFOL' was starting to stick."

THE QUEST FOR ELECTRICITY

In an illustration of the long and winding path that innovation can take, the LEGO Group spent decades looking for a new way to deliver electricity within sets – with a big dream to actually conduct power through elements without wires

***Words:** Daniel Konstanski*

4,5V
Vergessen Sie bitte nicht, 3 Stck. 1,5 V Batterien zu kaufen.
Electronic
LEGO System

In 1965, the LEGO Group embarked on a journey that would span three decades. The company's goal was to infuse the LEGO System with electricity. Between 1965 and 1994, the LEGO Group filed patents that show the progression of these efforts.

Electricity was a major focus for the LEGO Group during the early 1960s. Motorising trains was essential to making those products appealing and that goal was achieved in 1966. Alongside that, a second research and development stream sought to seamlessly integrate electricity with the wider LEGO System in Play.

That vision was laid out in a patent filed in June 1965 ponderously titled 'Methods and Components for Making Structures Comprising Electrical Circuits.'

The objective of this system, referred to here as Phase 1, was to create a family of parts that could be incorporated into normal LEGO builds while making functional circuits to power a variety of new electrical elements. The whole vision was clearly laid out in a single illustration that depicts the three classes of elements that would be required – electrical conductors, electrical modulators and electrical users.

The aim was to to minimise or even eliminate wires. The ambition was that power shouldn't be run to a motor or light via cables, it should be able to travel through the build itself. In Phase 1, LEGO designers envisioned a pair of wires connecting the battery box to a pair of special bricks designed to receive plugs. From there, electricity would be transported through a variety of different conducing components – foils and bricks.

Foils would have been thin, metallic, sheets with holes or raised sections to accommodate studs. There are significant similarities between these conducting components and the decorative foils manufactured for Modulex. It is likely that they would have been made in a similar way.

Concurrently, the designers envisioned conducting bricks. As if this whole venture wasn't complicated enough already, two variants of these bricks were planned. The first, and most ambitious, involved creating elements that were conductive over their entire surface. Two methods for accomplishing this were proposed in the patent. One approach would have sprayed a thin metal film onto the surface of standard bricks, while the other would have introduced a conductive powder into the plastic mix at the moulding stage.

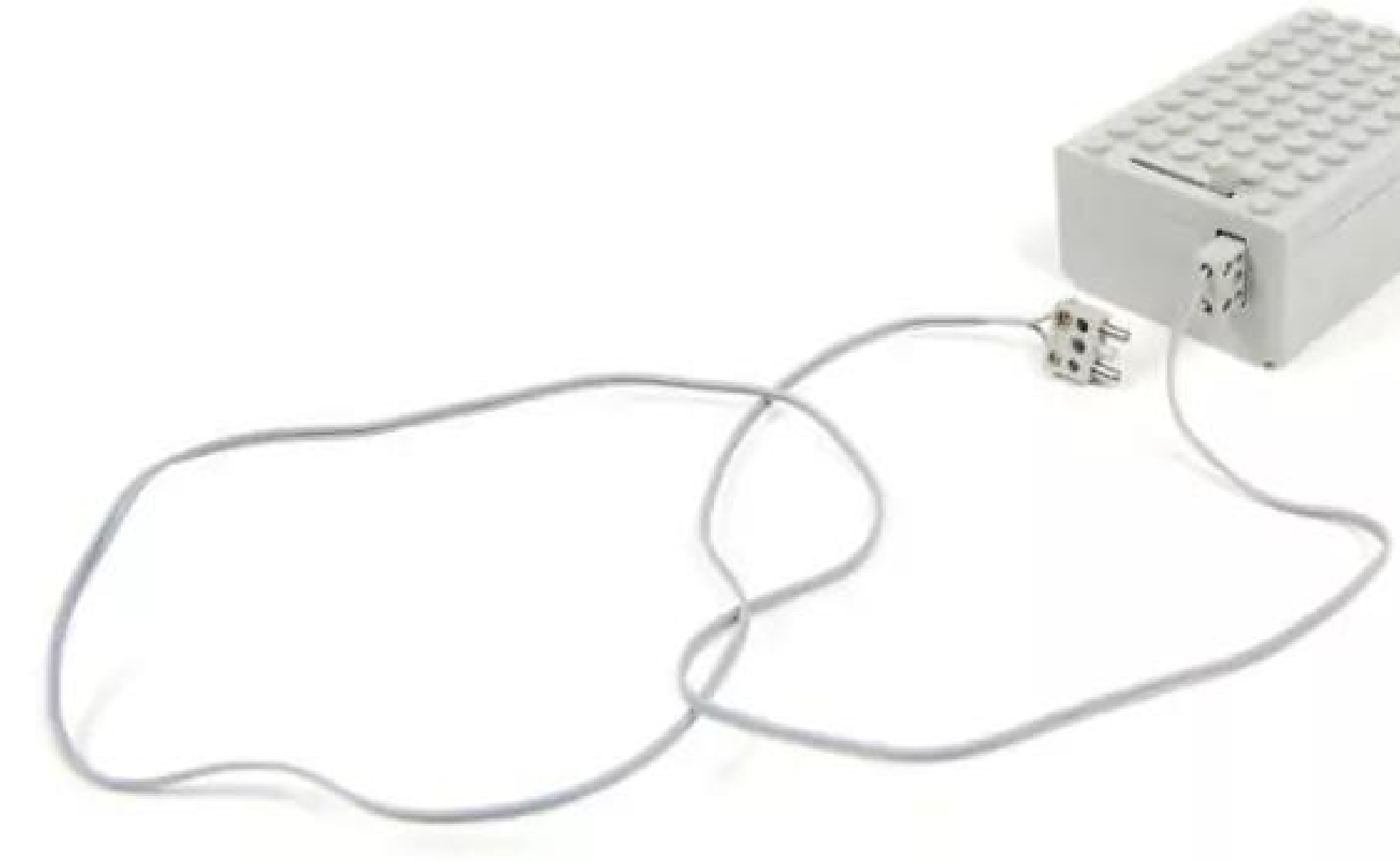
This initial Phase 1 patent is the only time the LEGO Group entertained creating fully conductive bricks. Subsequent testing likely revealed that sprays changed the dimensions and tolerances too much, which is alluded to in a later patent. Introducing conductive material into the moulding formula may have changed the characteristics of the plastic too much.

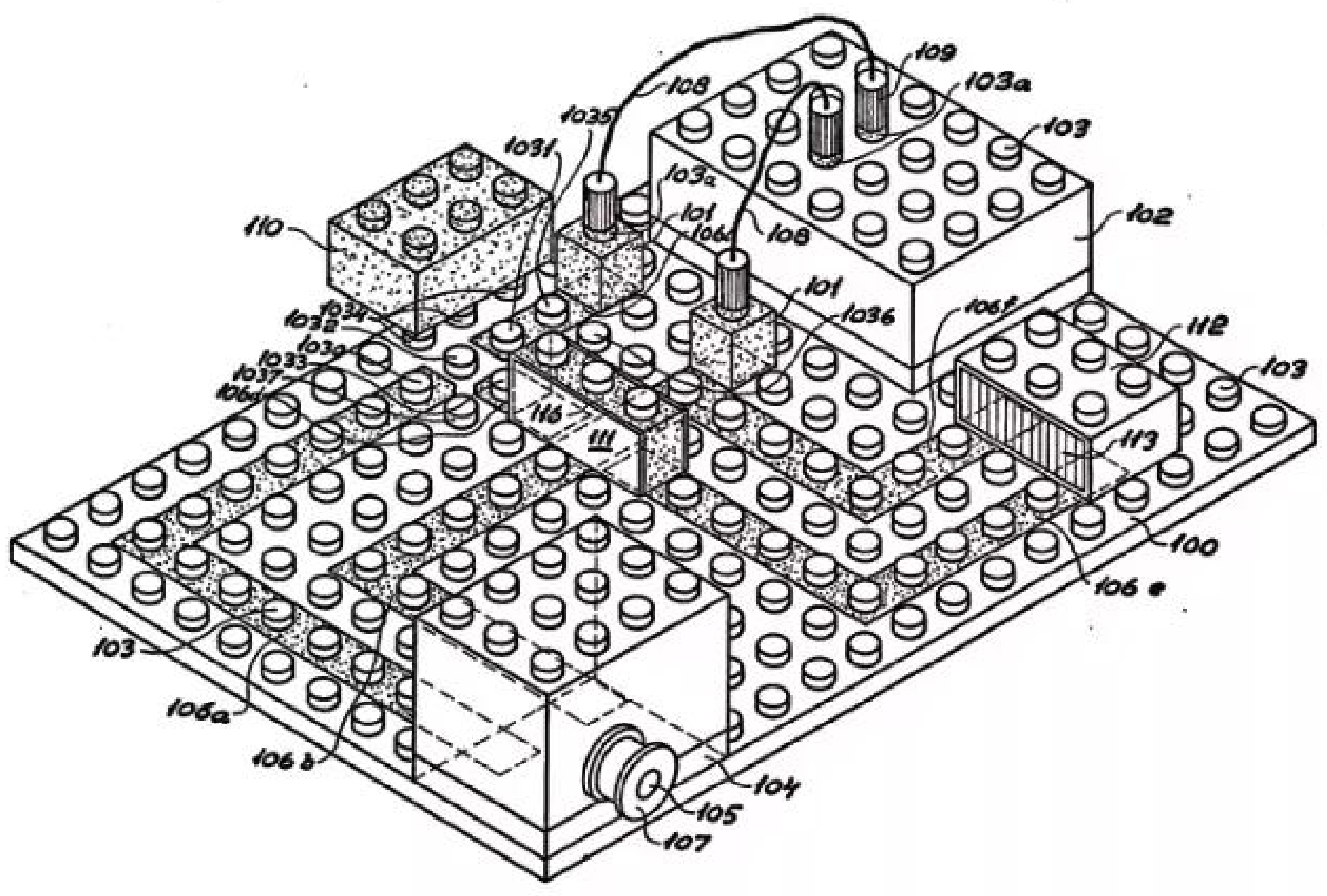
Safeguarding an idea before testing to see if it's actually viable is a common patent practice worldwide, as filings are made to secure an idea. The specifics of how to accomplish the concept can be determined through experimentation later. That means that although these concepts were patented, they were not necessarily close to going into production.

The second approach to electrifying standard bricks ended up being developed further. Initially it involved introducing bands that would wrap around existing elements, almost like a shell or case. The problem with that approach is immediately apparent – it would preclude elements from joining and stacking normally.

There are indications that this was a backup idea, as most of the patent's illustrations and language seem to favour some version of the fully conductive brick. Nevertheless, this alternate approach was included.

Having established how electricity would move across a build through the conductive elements, designers next turned their attention

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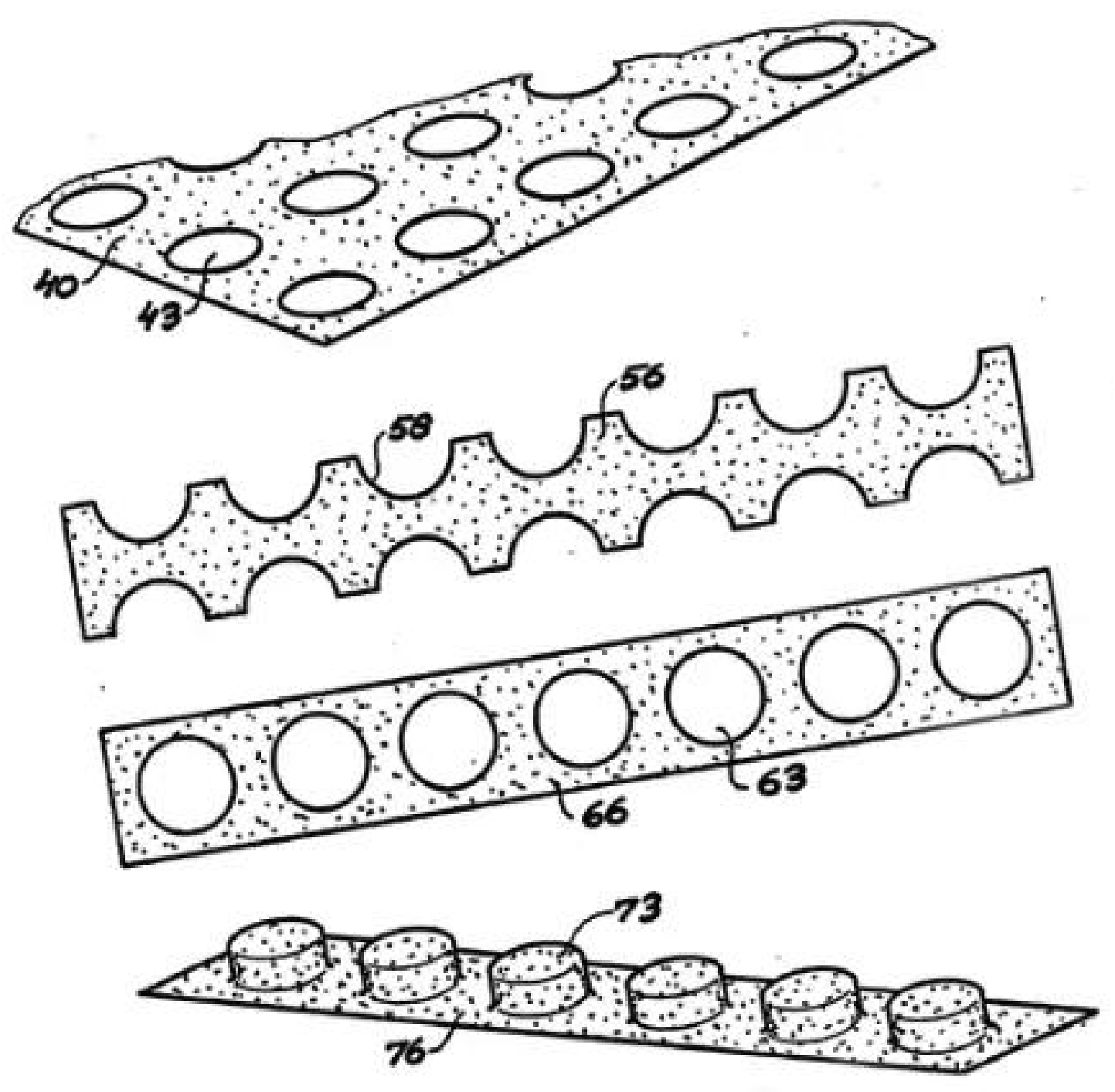
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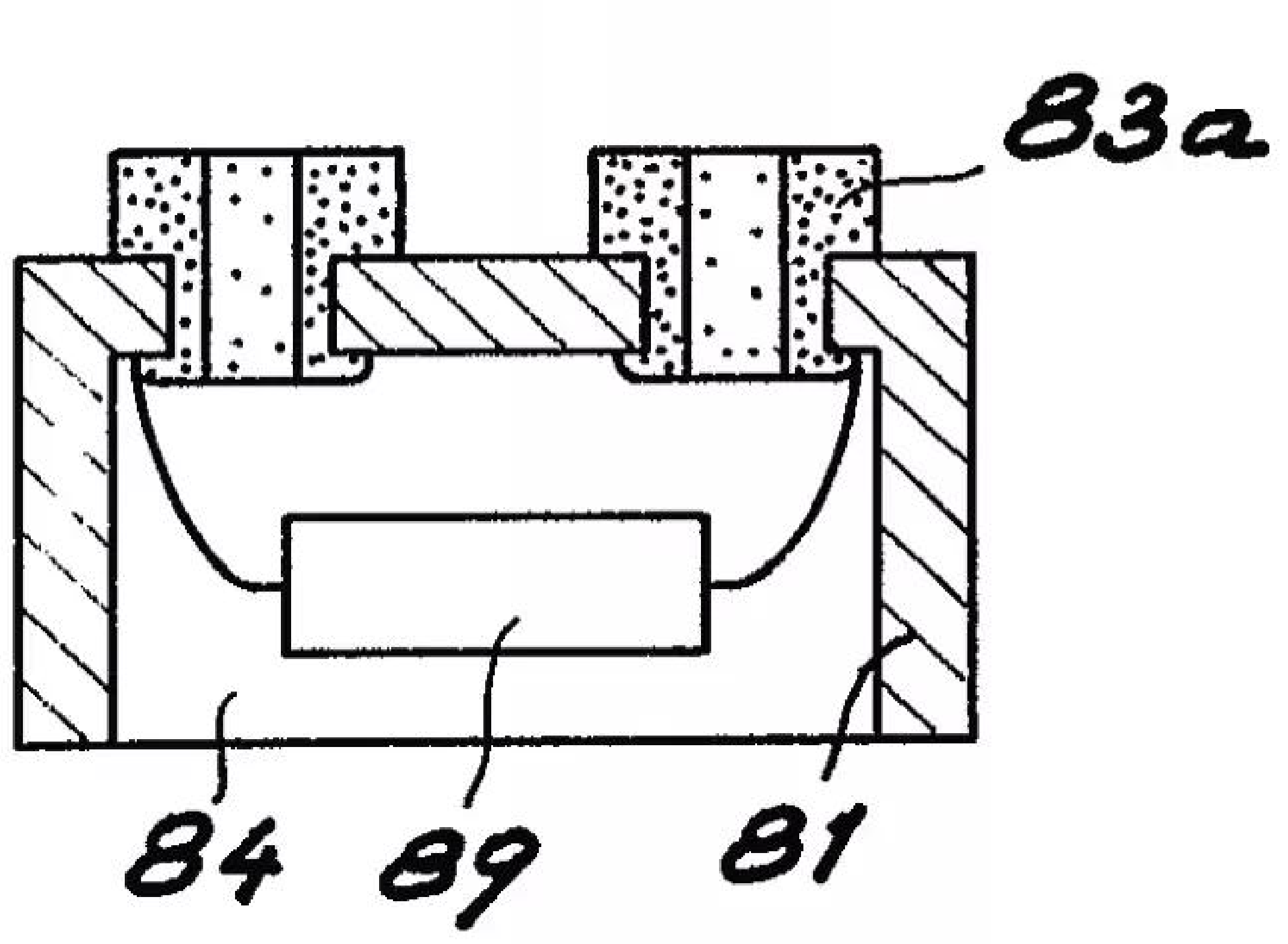

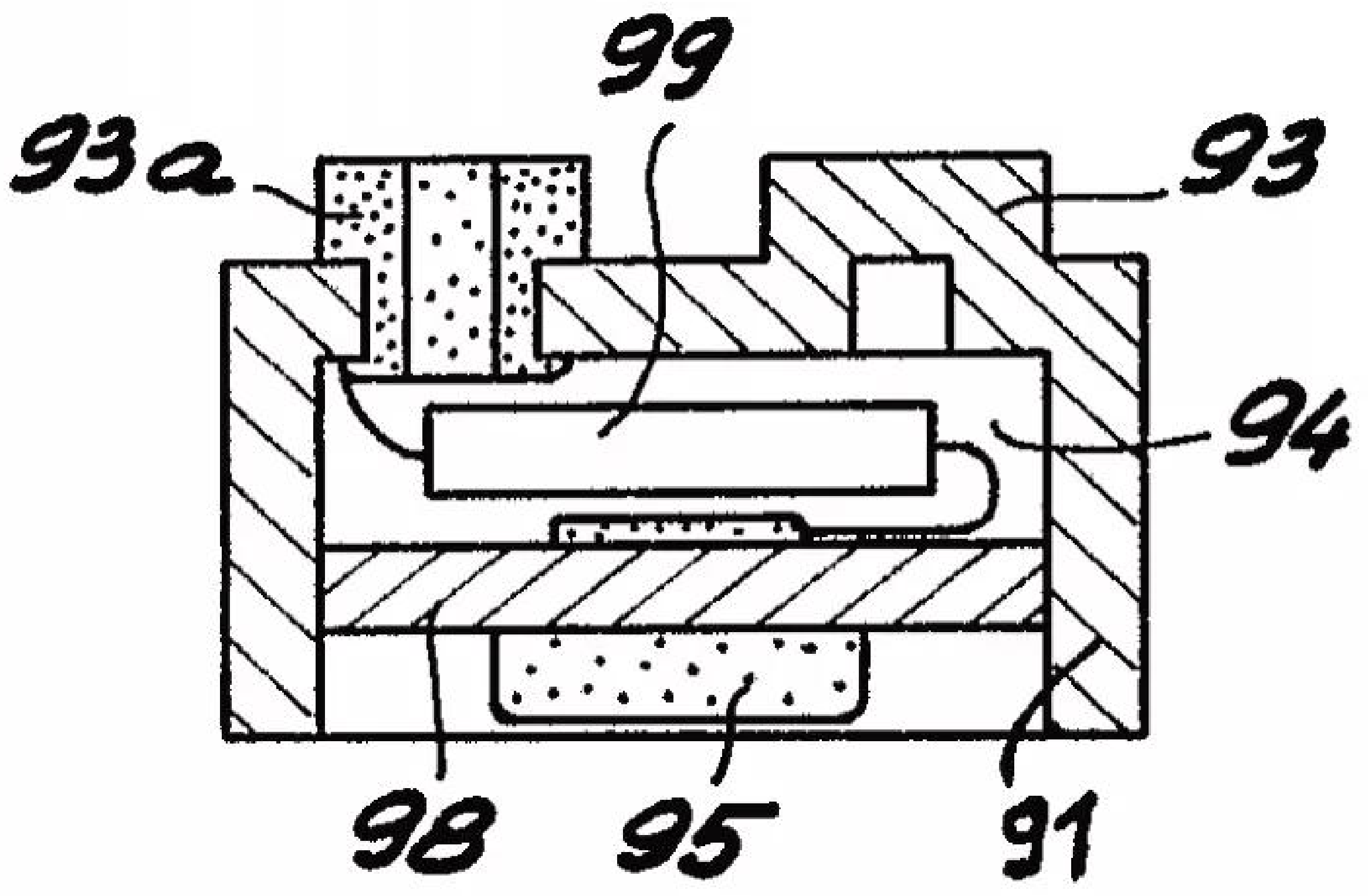
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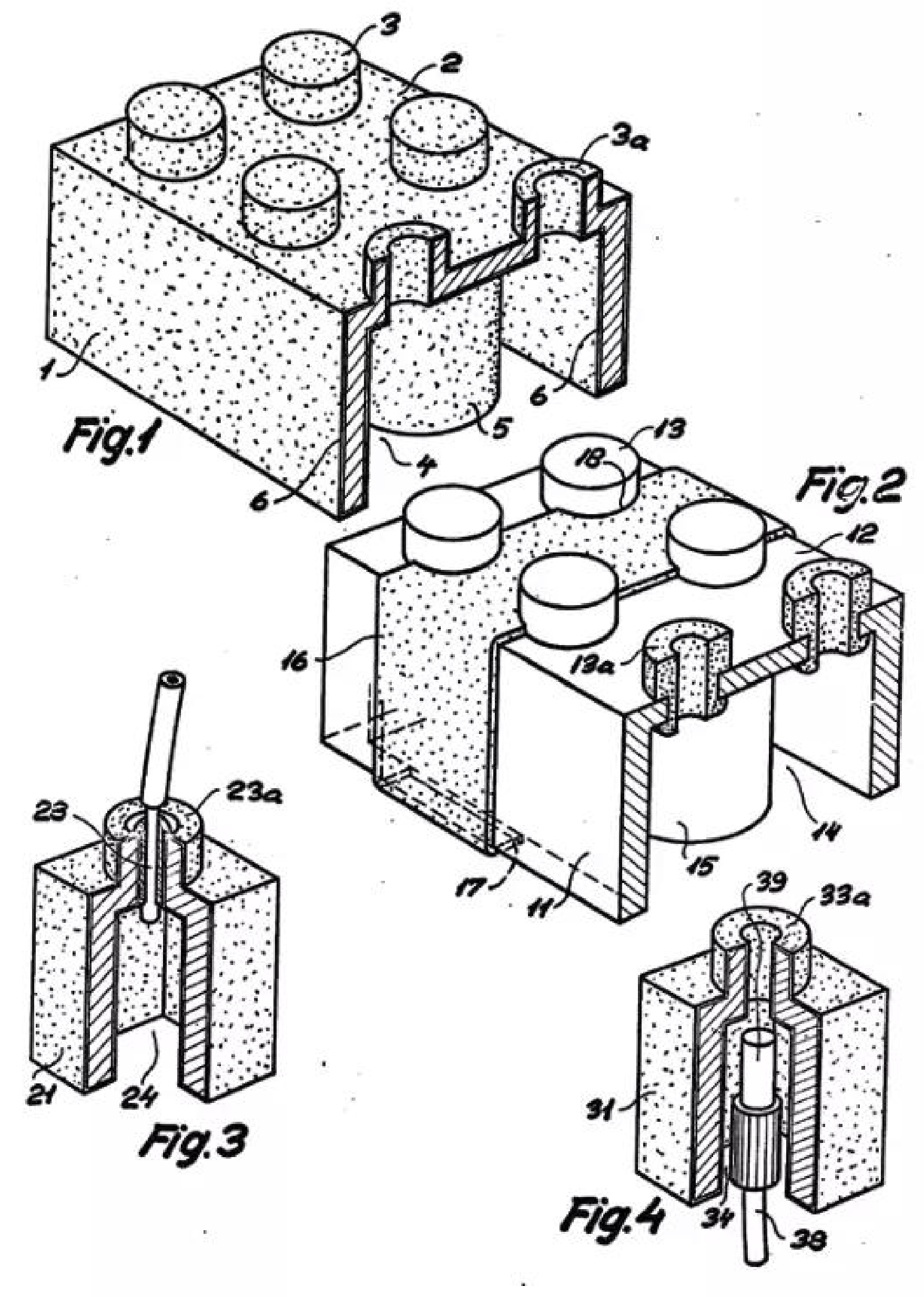
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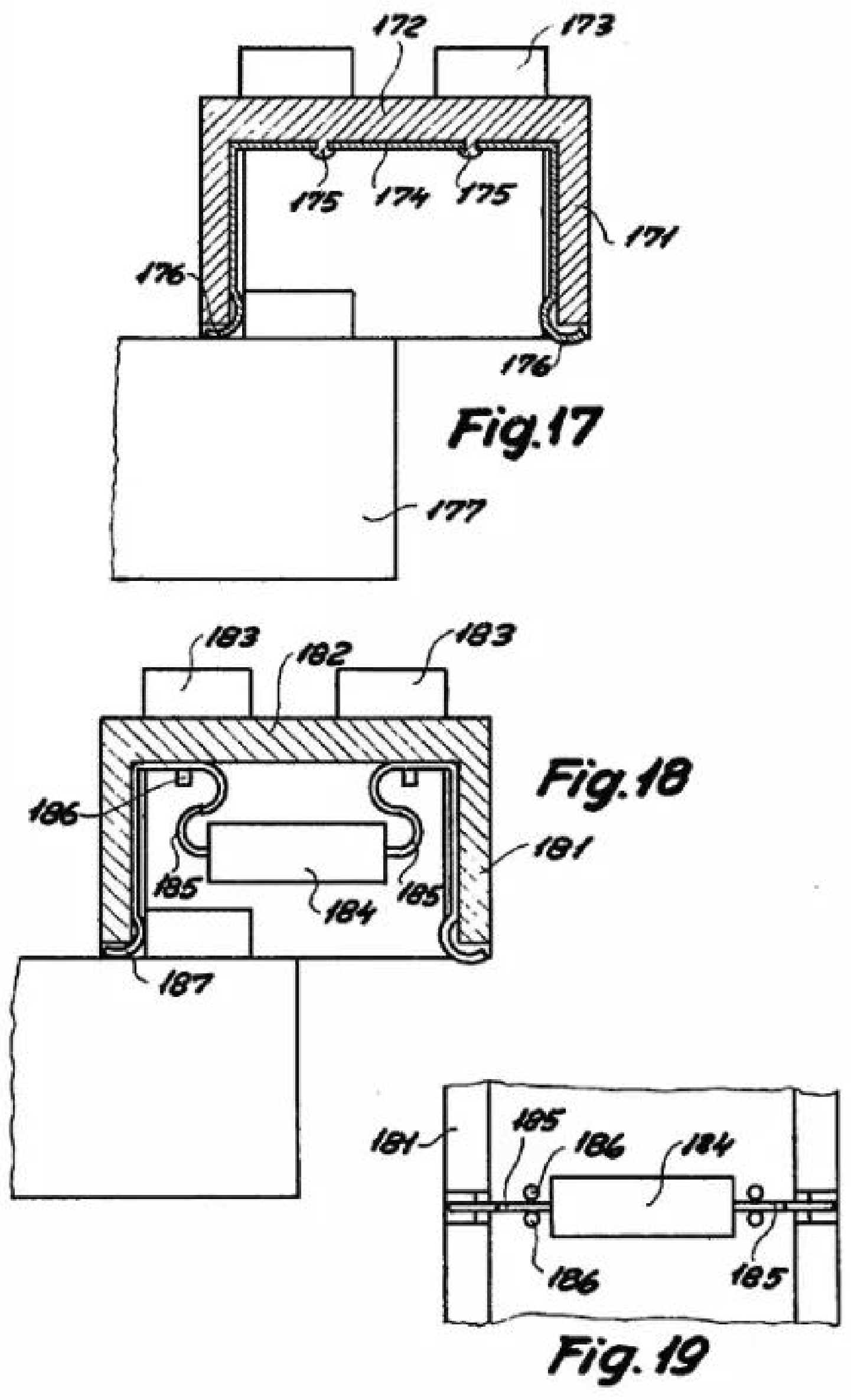
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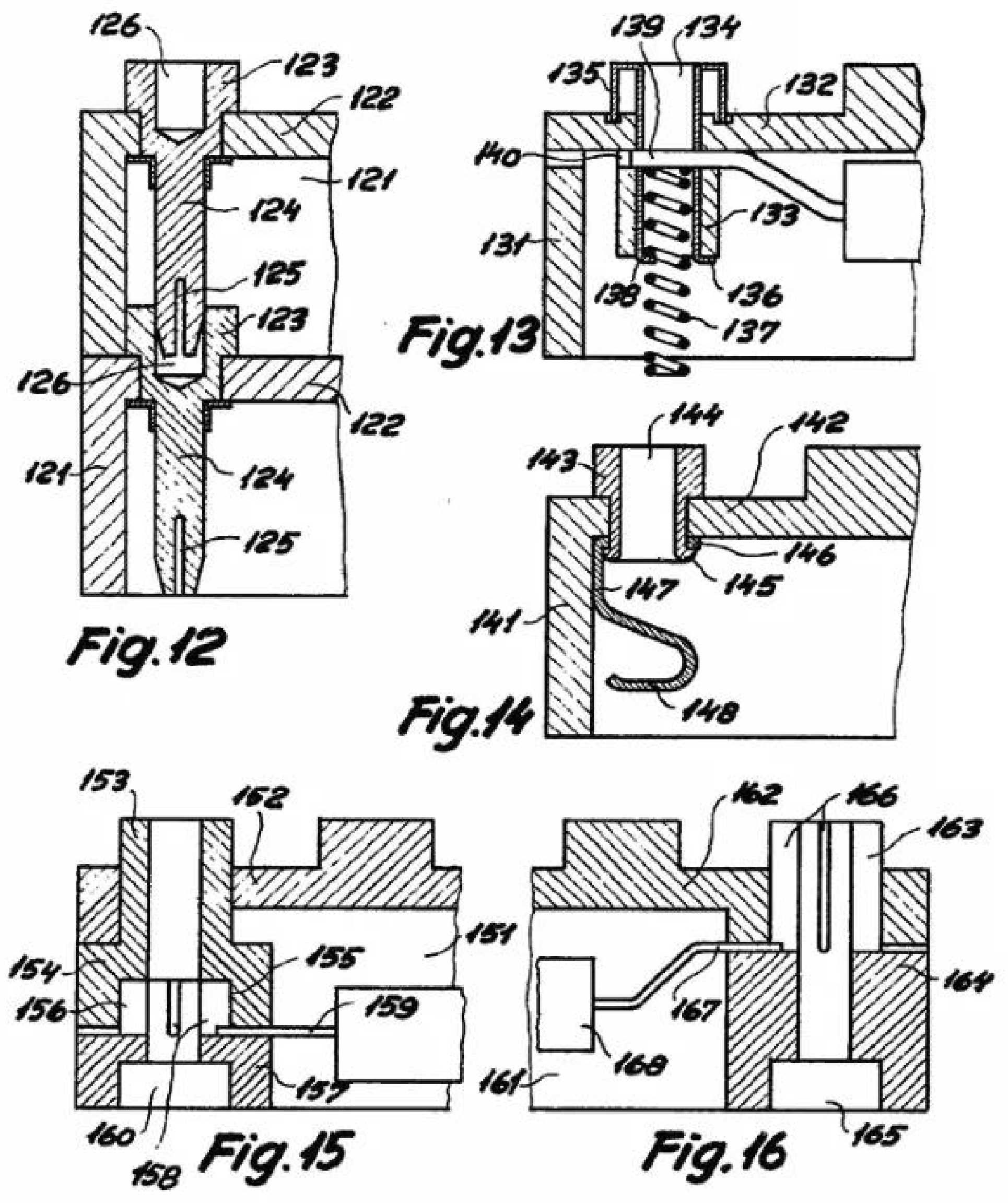
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Fig.16

***Opposite page:** The quest for electricity began as a parallel effort with the earliest LEGO trains.*

***Top row, left to right:** Eliminating wires was the initial vision for the electrified LEGO system.*

The initial vision for a family of electrified LEGO components.

Several different styles of foils were proposed for moving electricity across builds.

***Left:** Options included completely conductive and metallic bands and special initial elements that would receive the plugs from the battery.*

***Bottom row, left to right:** Resistors and transistors would have been housed within 2x2 bricks.*

Additional ideas for electrical modifiers and conducting surfaces were not included in the original Danish patent.

The LEGO Group considered methods for passing electricity through bricks using hollow studs with internal pins, springs and wires.

***Below:** Early LEGO motors maintained the original idea of having integrated metal conductors that would attach directly to electrified bricks.*

to modulating that current. They suggested using modified versions of standard components with electrical constructs inside of them. Resistors, capacitors and other types of modulating components found on circuit boards were proposed to be housed within elements. It is acknowledged in the text that these would need to be hand soldered.

It is at this point of the story that a unique feature of mid-20th century patents reveals just how fast the LEGO Group was moving on this effort. During this era, patents had to be filed individually in each country where protection was being sought. While they all reference one another, there could be, and often were, differences. Those differences can reveal evolutions or refinements of ideas occurring in the few months between filings.

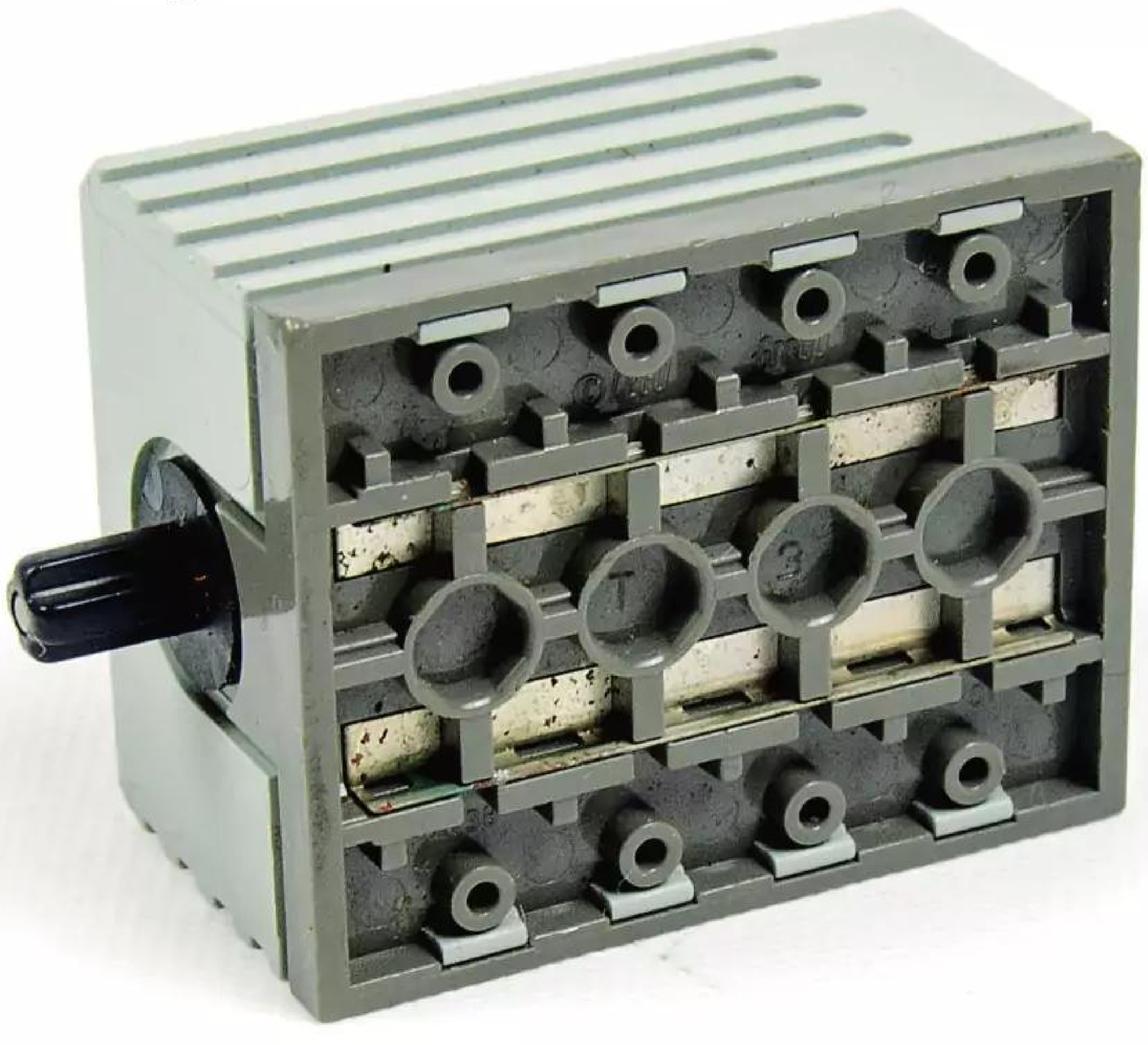
Methods and Components for Making Structures Comprising Electrical Circuits Danish patent contained only 11 illustrations. However, later versions of the same patent filed in Britain and other countries included an additional eight drawings. More options were eing considered for modulator elements along with several methods for connecting electrified studs to each other through a brick using a pin system.

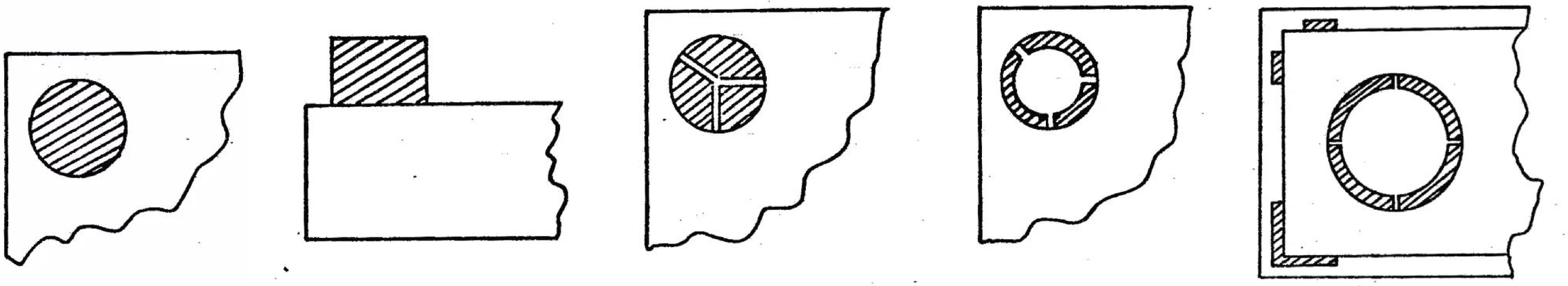
The third class of element in the original patent were the motors, lights and anything else that would have used the electricity. It might seem like these should be the most important aspects of the system being patented, as they would be the part that would interest children. Yet little more than a passing mention is made to what the transported electricity would be used for.

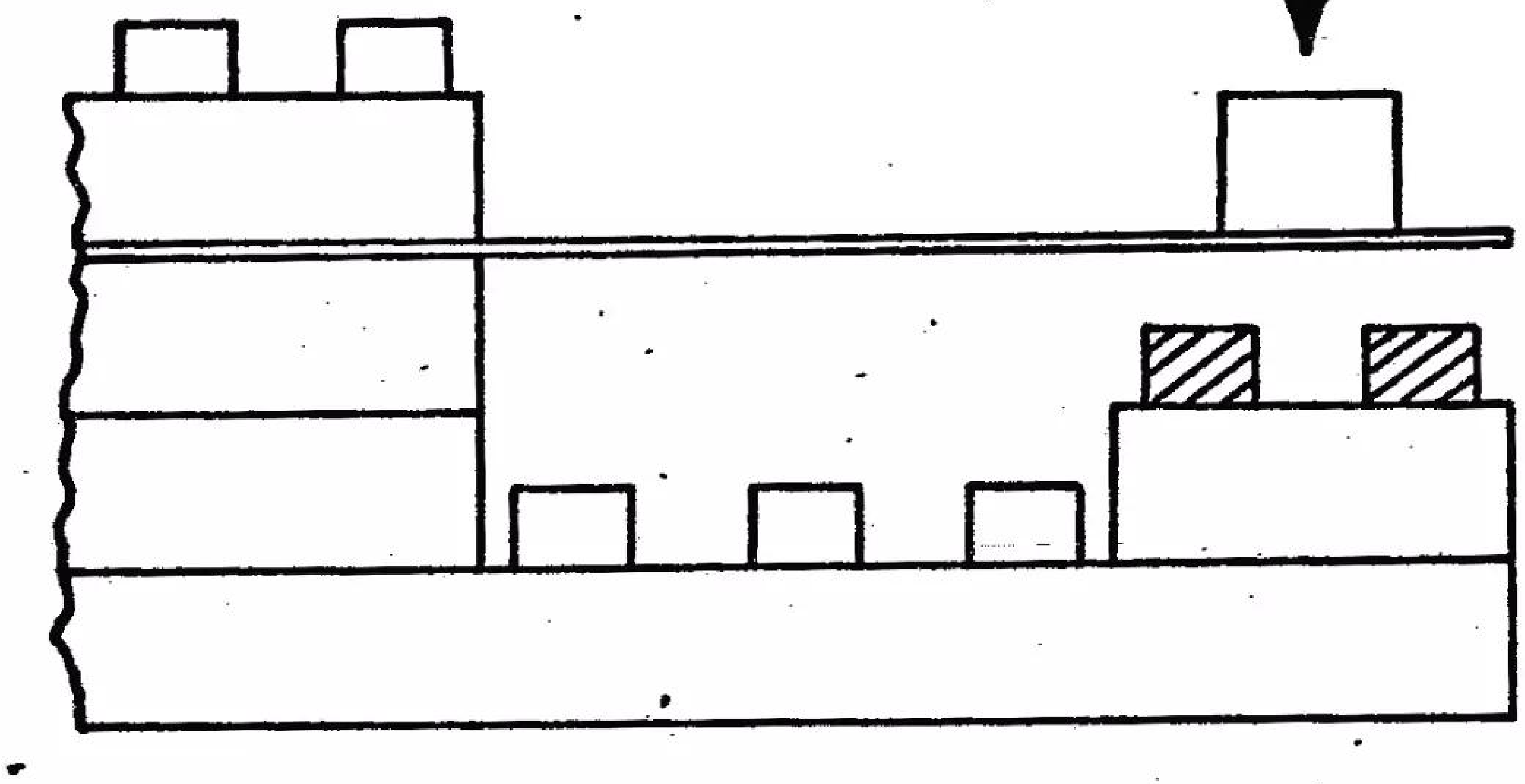
It makes sense though, as small motors, lights and even sound generating components were all standard in toys of this era. Such features were universal – what was unique about the LEGO Group's concept was how the circuits were made within the build, so that was what the patent focused on describing and protecting.

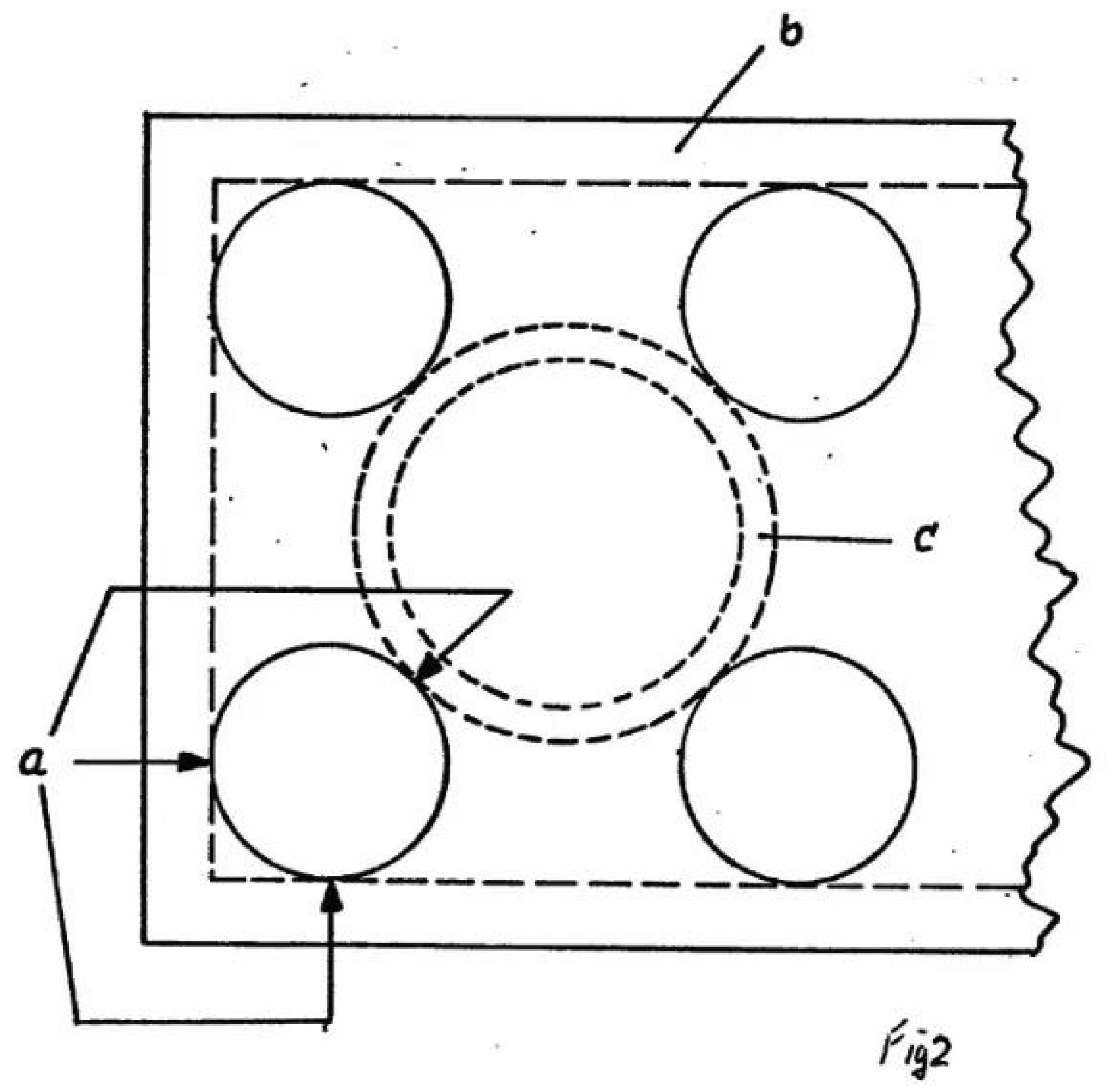
The initial patent filed in 1965, which was ultimately granted four years later in 1969, lays out the company's vision for electrifying the brick. The objective was to integrate relatively robust electrical circuits into the standard LEGO System of elements. It is likely that the battery boxes and associated cables produced for LEGO Train sets in the 1960s were developed in conjunction with this effort.

Through special parts that could be directly incorporated into builds or draped over and around them, current would be able to flow through LEGO builds from those battery boxes to power a wide range of accessories that would be developed through the years. The goal was to avoid having obtrusive wires all over builds.









***Above and far left:** The 1975 patent proposed metallic studs, tubes and inserts.*

***Left:** The metal band idea evolved in 1975 to utilise the stud tube interface for both clutch power and electrical conductivity.*

PHASE 2

The next filing occurred 10 years later in 1975. During those intervening years, the LEGO Group experimented to try and realise the dream of the 1965 Phase 1 patent. At some point production costs and short circuiting hampered those efforts.

Language in 1975's 'Terminal Block with Electrical Connection Option,' referred to as Phase 2 here, acknowledges the problems discovered during the previous decade's experimentation that revealed the 1965 Phase 1 approach to be unworkable.

The proposed methods for electrifying bricks changed their dimensions too much and the cost of producing special bricks that required soldering and other labour-intensive modifications was too high. It also proved to be too easy for builds to short circuit – there could be too many or too few paths for electricity to travel, thereby compromising everything.

The 1975 Phase 2 patent focuses primarily on a solution for the first problems. Electrical conductivity would be achieved through clutch power. Accordingly, it depicts metallic studs and tubes, along with metallic inlays within a brick. That would allow electricity to travel from one element to another at the points of contact. This solved the first problem so thoroughly that it is never mentioned again. However, Phase 2 did not propose solutions for the other two issues.

PHASE 3

Over the 10 years between 1984 and 1994, the LEGO Group filed seven patents for the evolving electrical system as the company tried different approaches to find that magic balance between production cost and usability.

In several of these instances, two patents, each securing a different approach for solving the same problem, were filed simultaneously. It is clear that each submission was followed by experimentation, the results of which are usually documented in the subsequent filing.

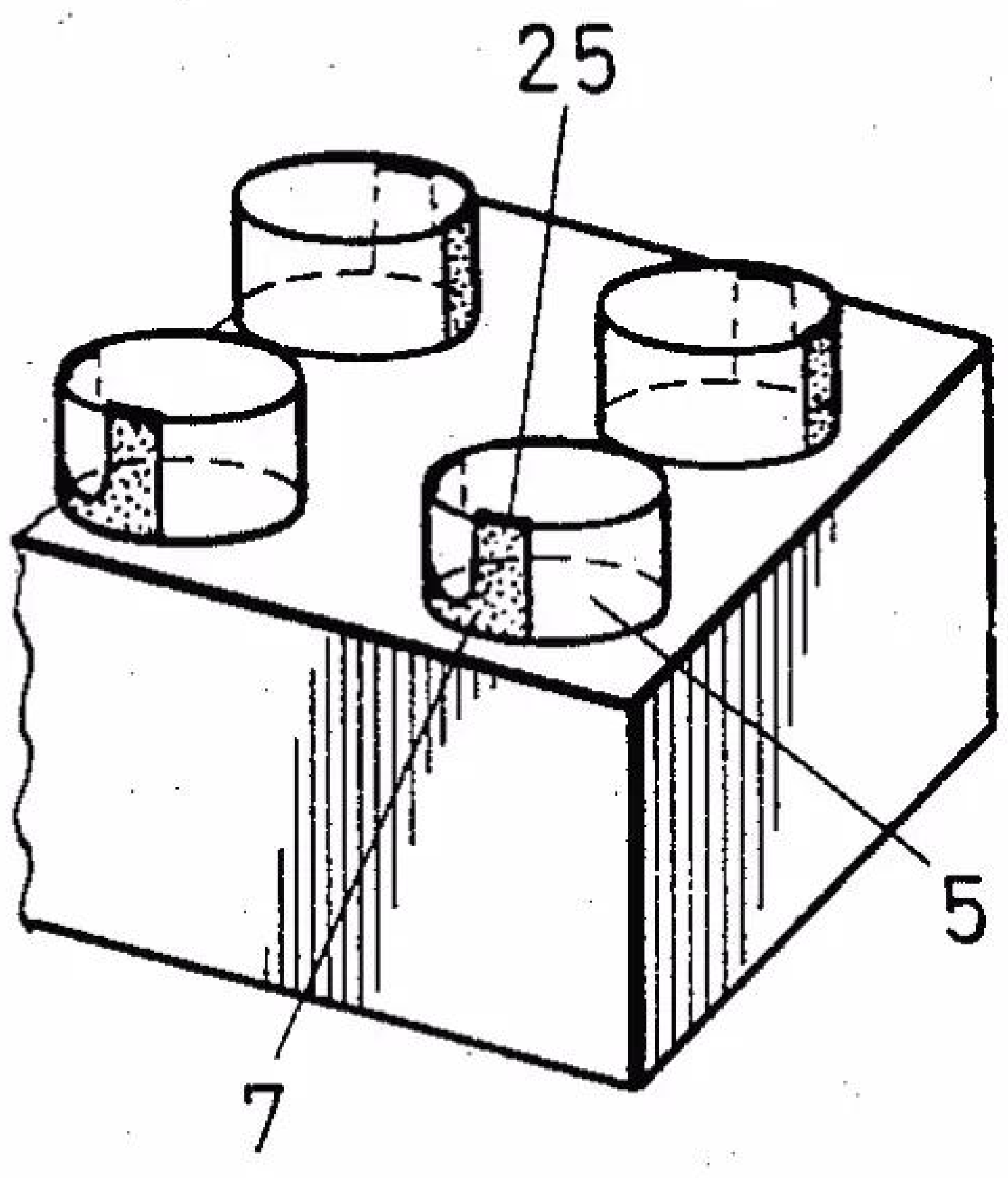
Nearly every patent contains a description of the shortcoming discovered in the previous system and the proposed solution. This flurry began in 1984 when two documents were filed a day apart.

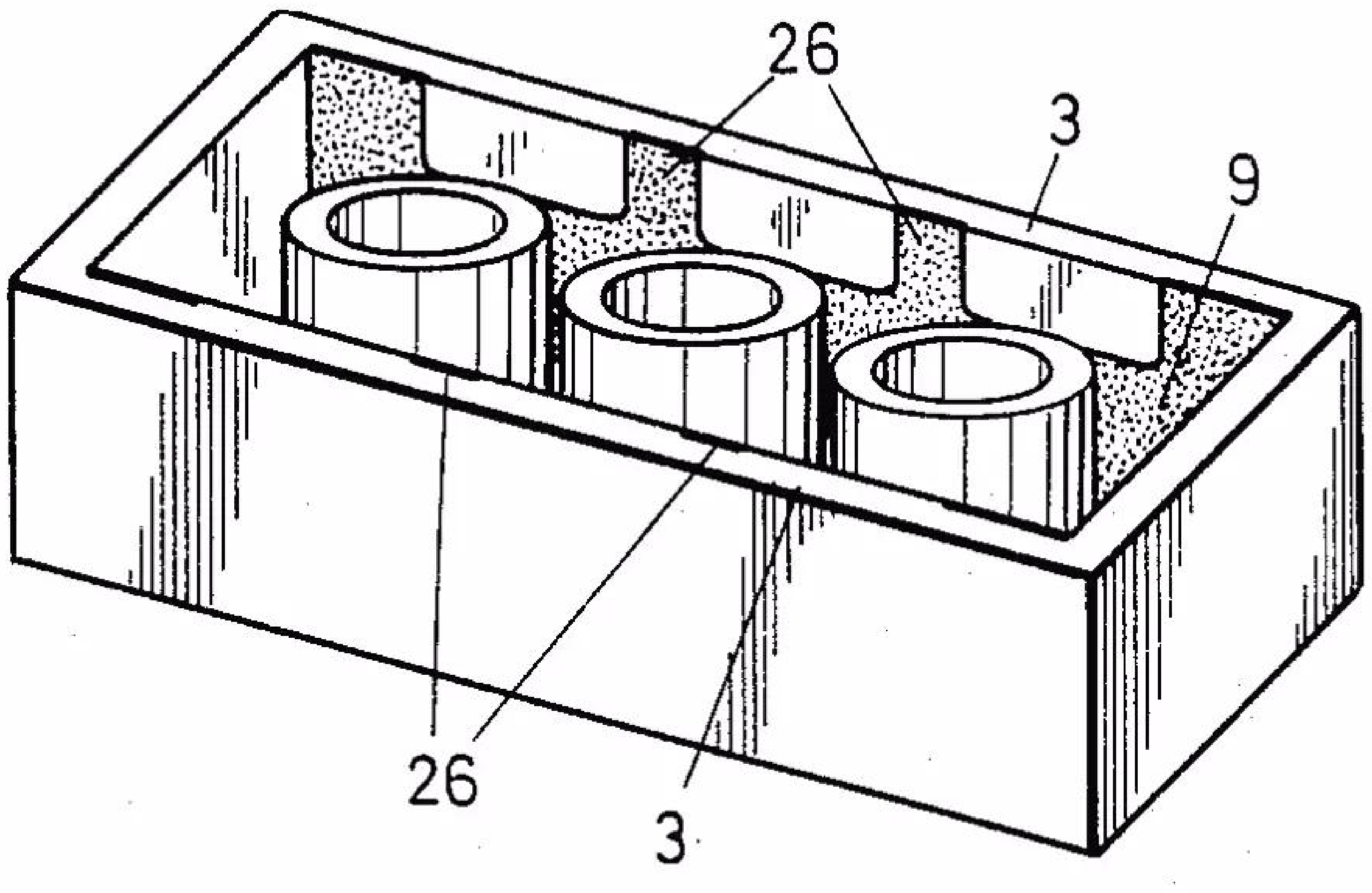
This pair of patents, dubbed in this series as Phase 3, shared almost identical names, 'Toy Building Block with Electrical Contacts' and 'Toy Building Block with Electrical Contacting Portions.' While almost the same naming convention, their minor differences highlight the slightly different approach taken by each.

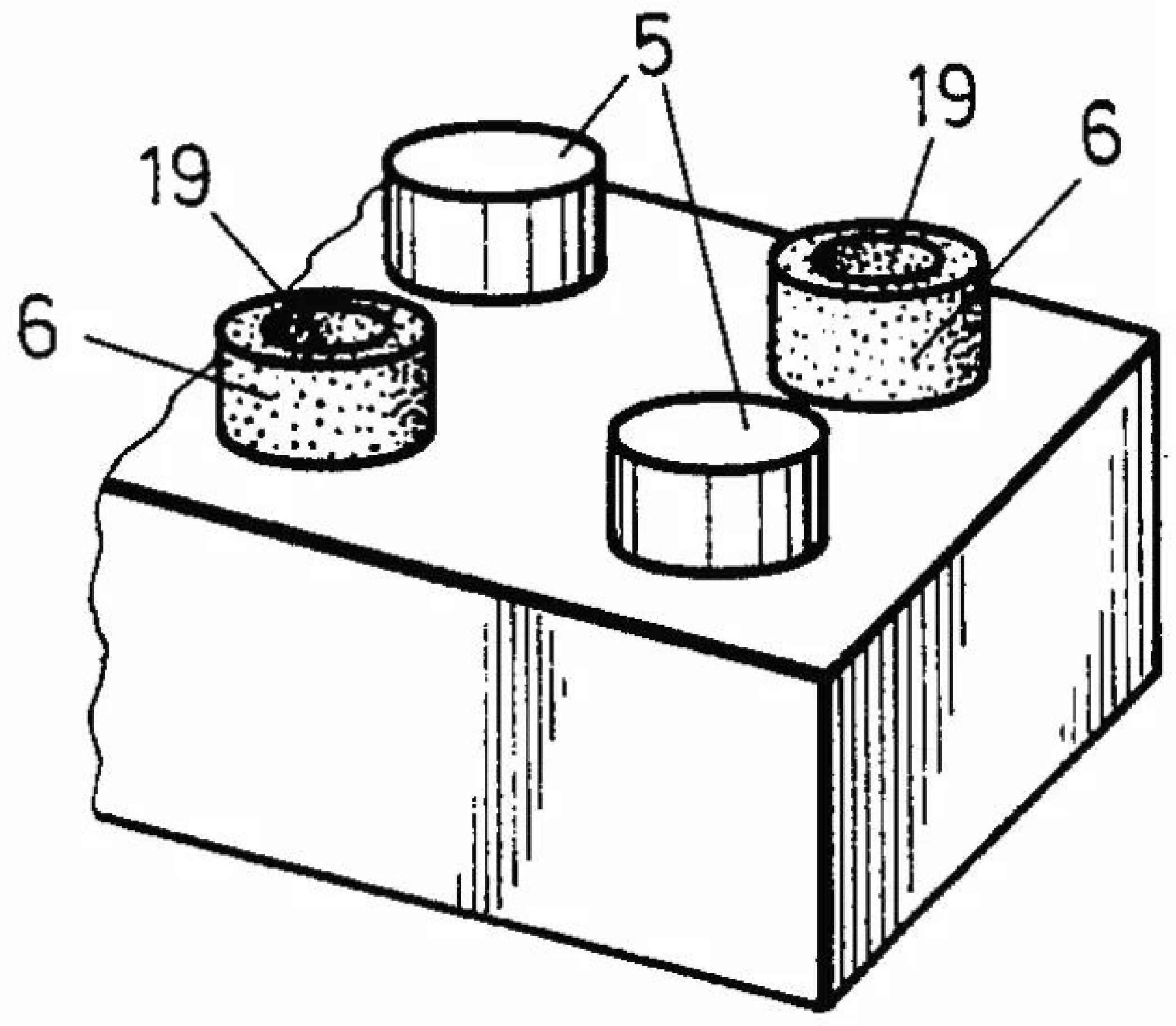
Both reference the 1975 Phase 2 patent and explain that the approach in that document, specifically using clutch power contact points as conductors, was sound but needed refinement to eliminate short circuiting. Both were applying the same approach to accomplishing that, which was to have one set of studs on a brick serve as the positive or 'hot' part of the circuit, with the other set of studs playing the role of a circuit's negative side which returns current back to the power source.

The idea was that the way these studs were electrified would only complete an electrical pathway when connected to studs of their same type, thereby eliminating short circuiting. If a positive stud were attached to a negative stud, while clutch power would still work, their conducting components would not touch so there would be no short circuiting.

The first approach involved fully electrifying every other stud in a row and connecting them to a corresponding metal plate or wave shaped insert on the interior wall of the brick's underside. Electricity would flow up through the plate into the studs and only into the next brick if it was on the same part of the circuit. This would prevent short circuiting no matter the orientation of the two bricks.







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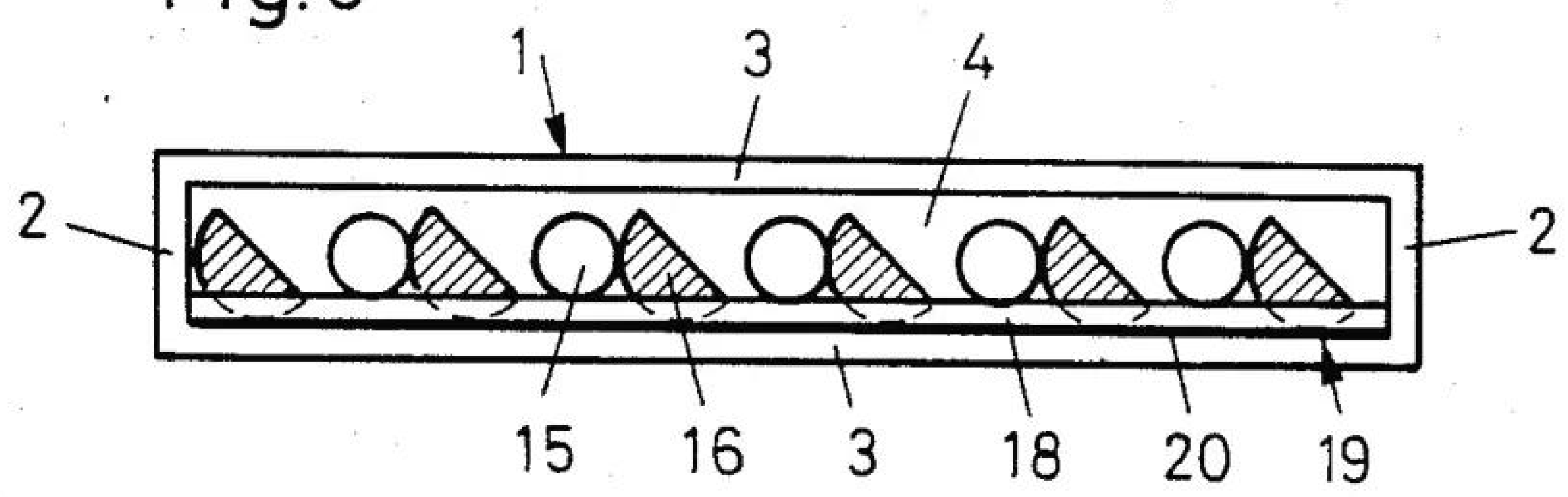
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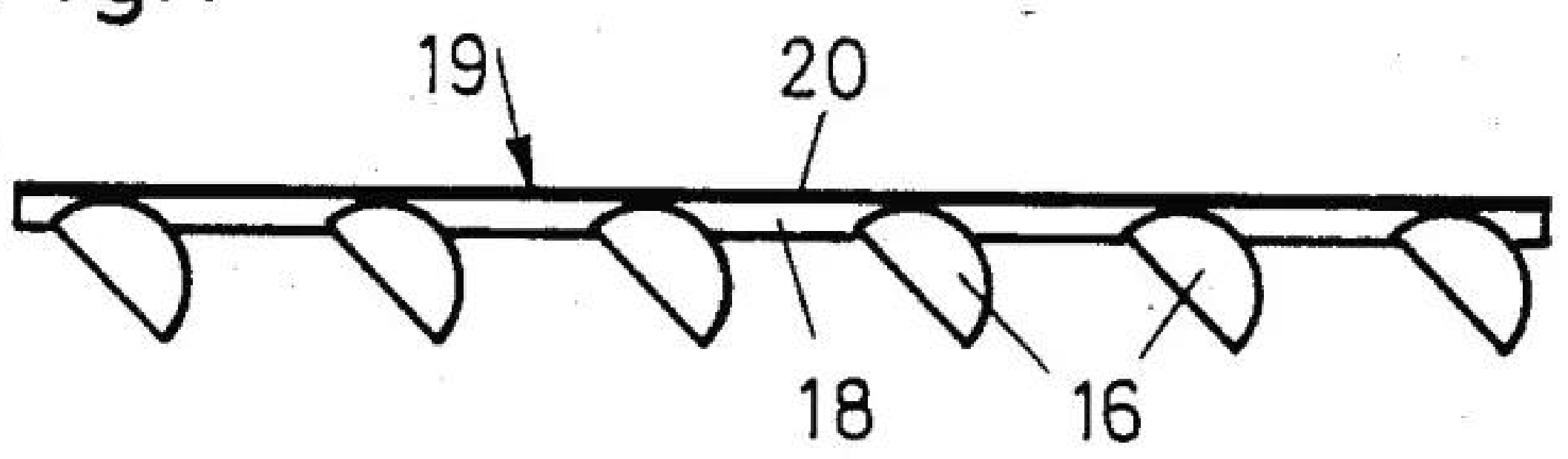

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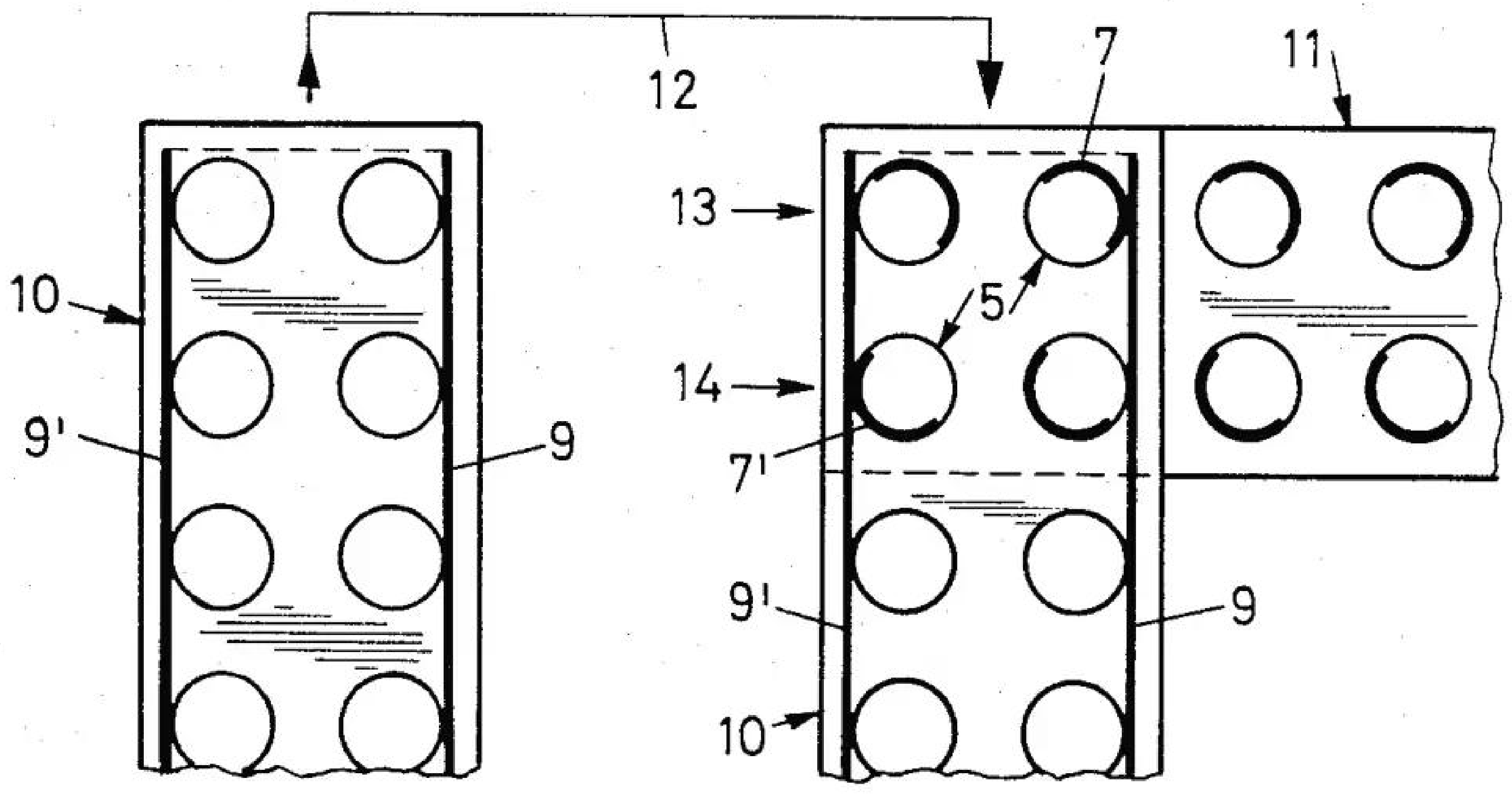
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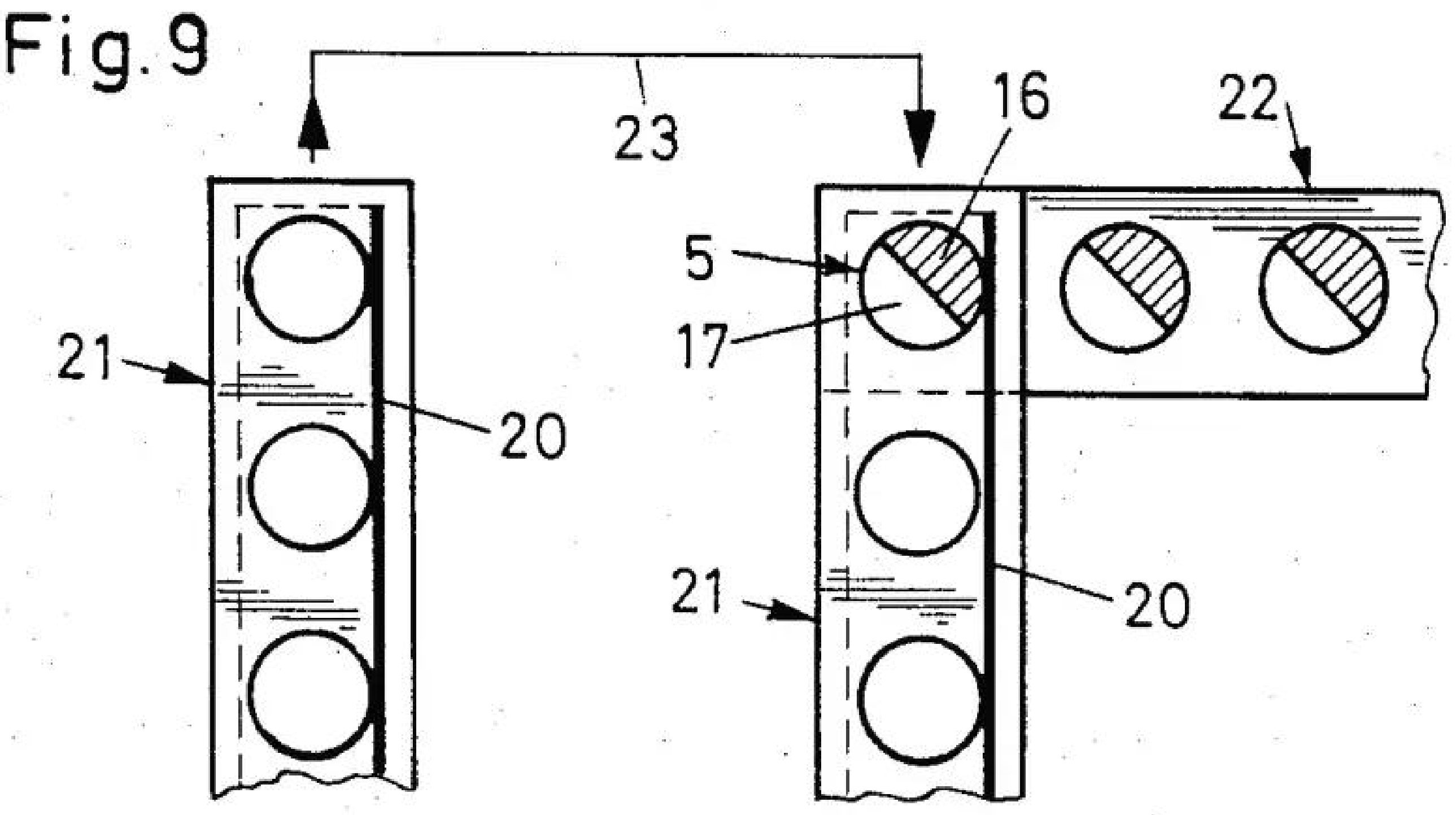
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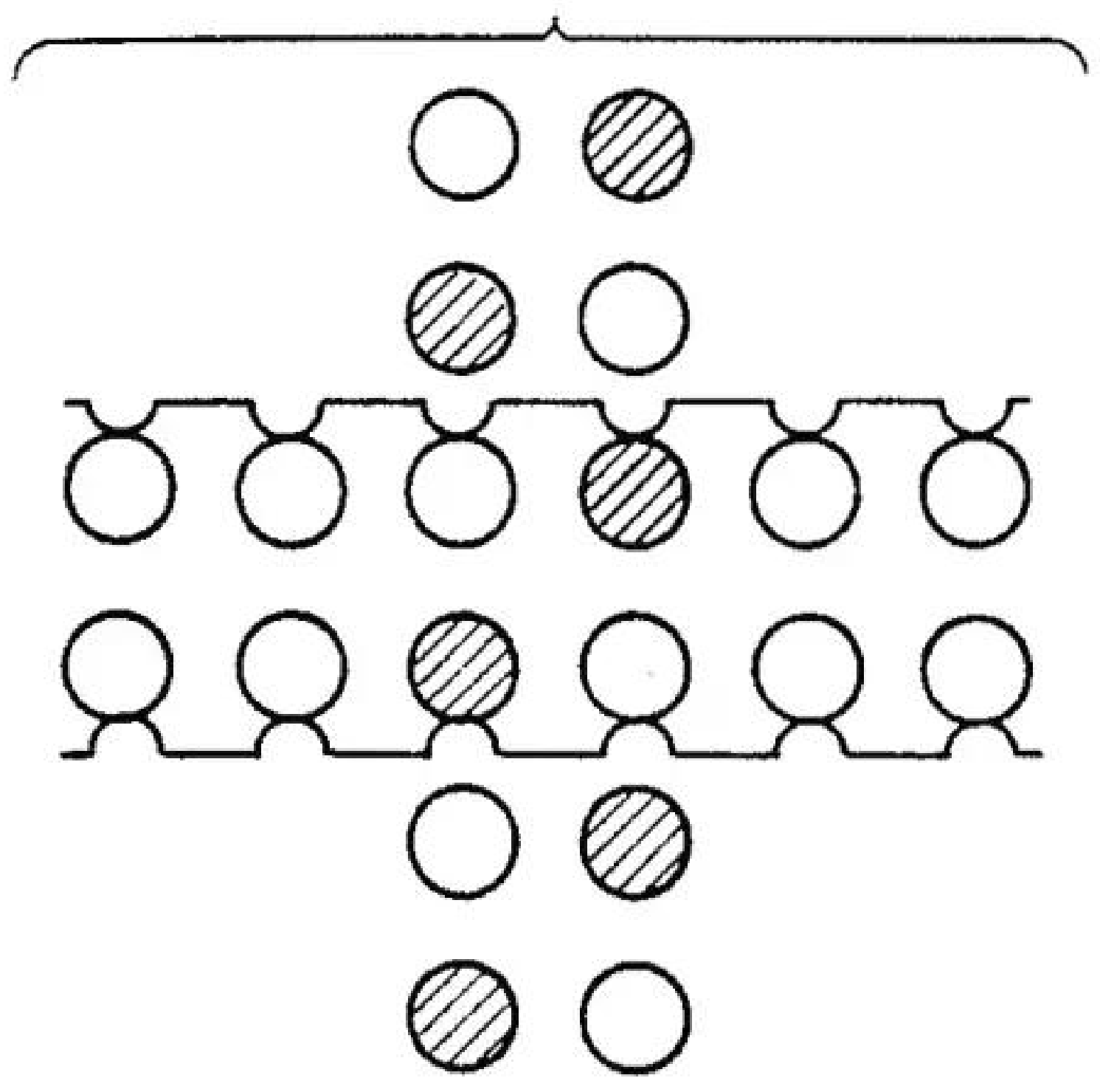

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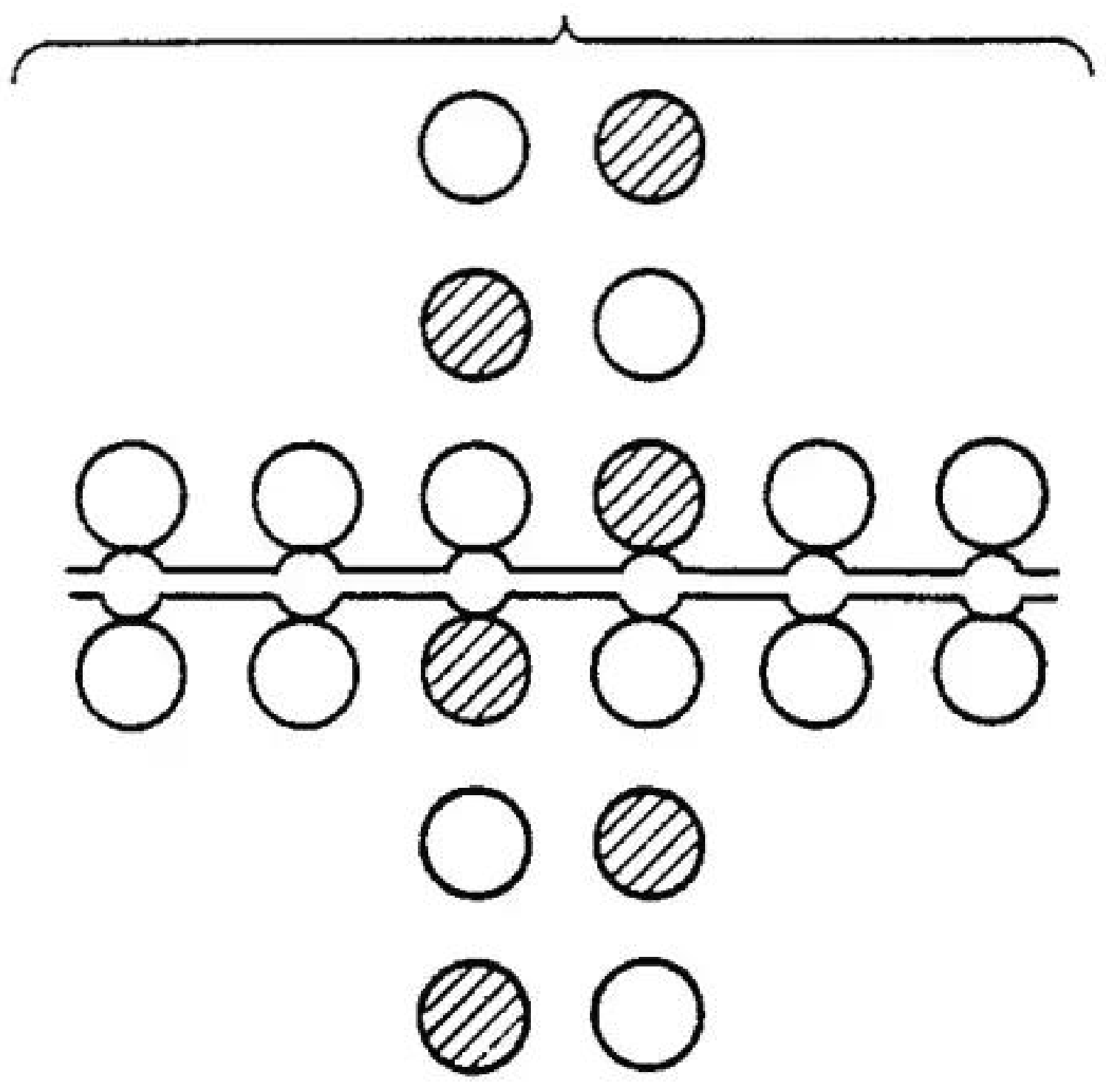

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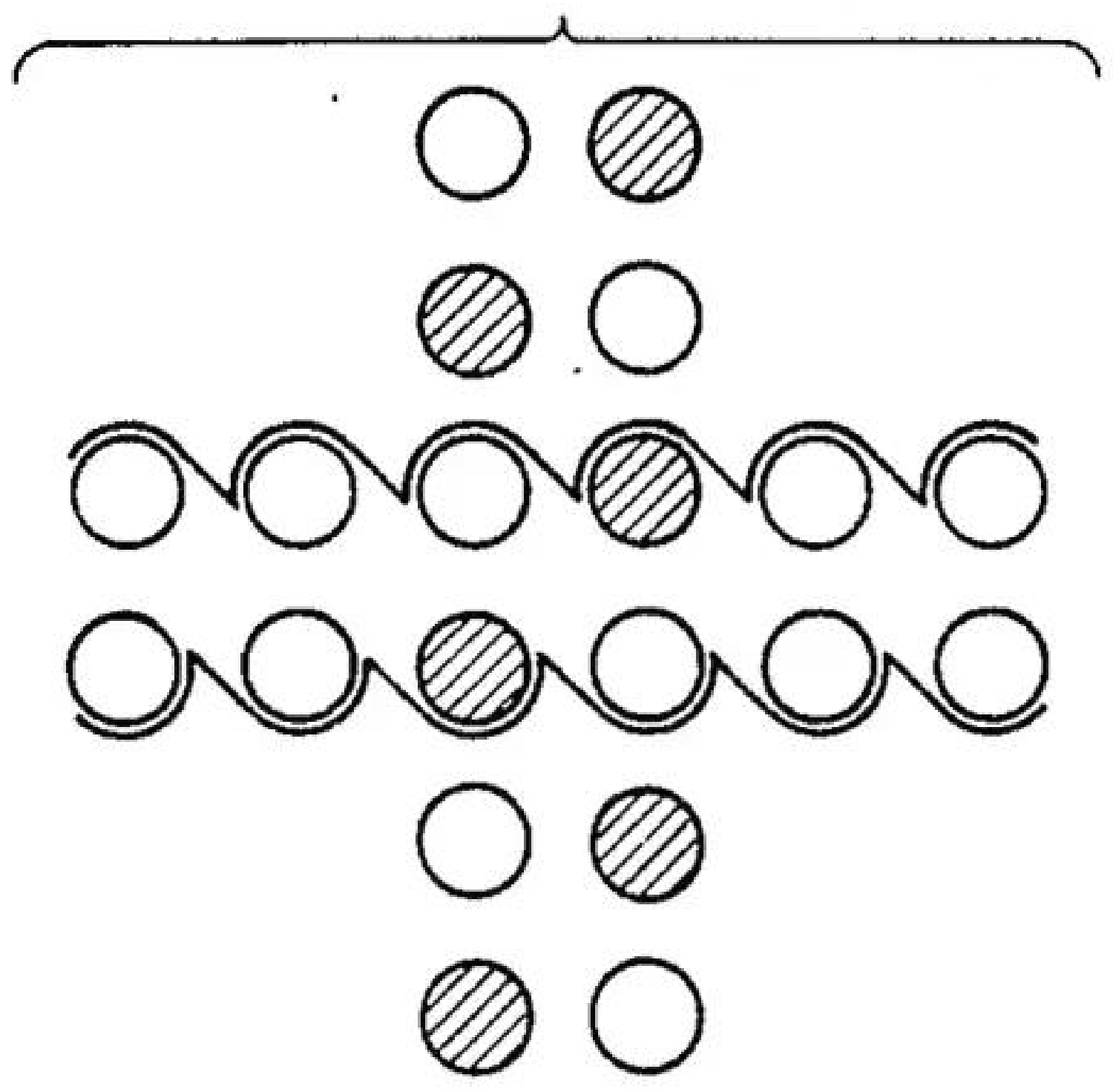

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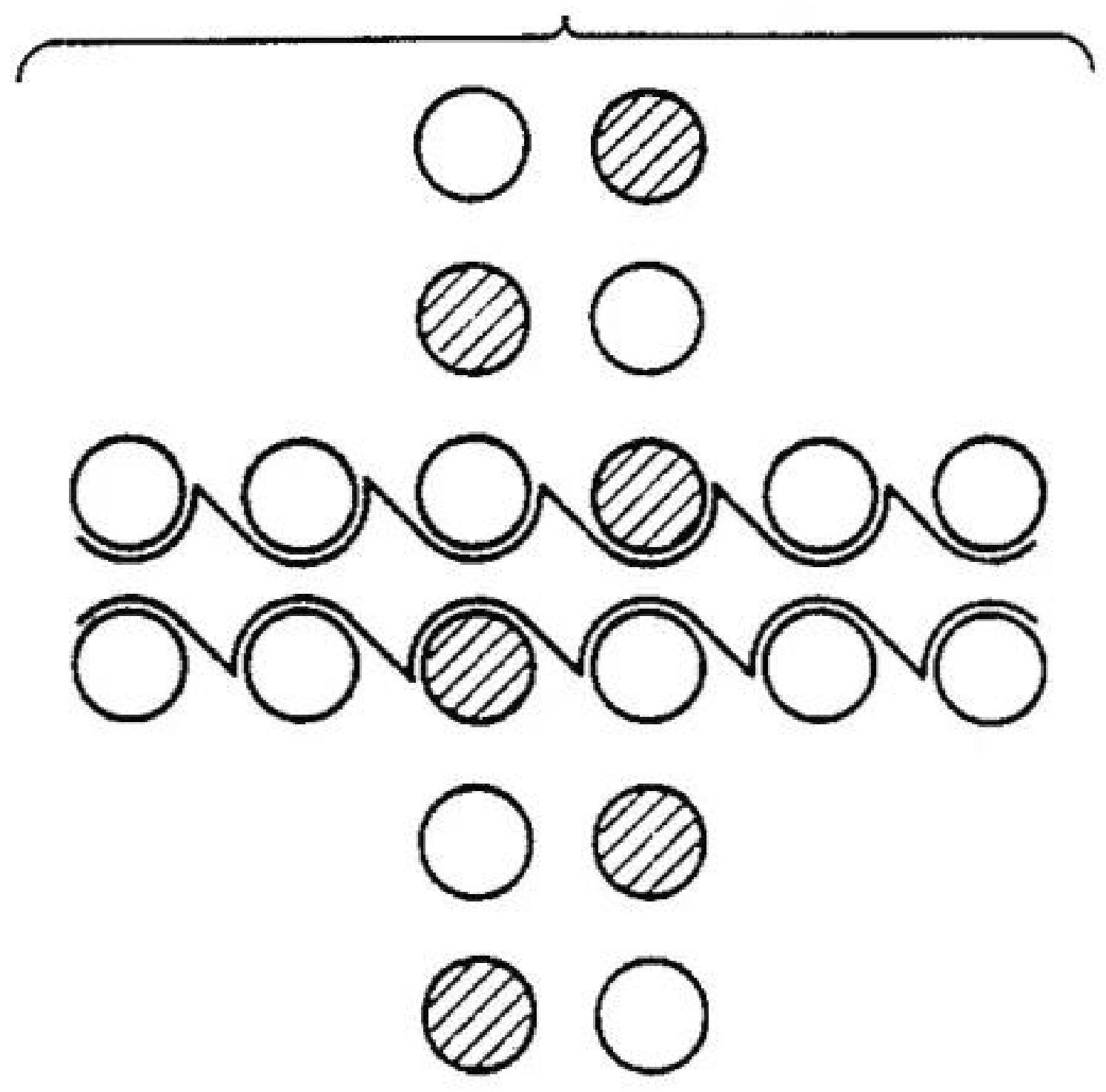

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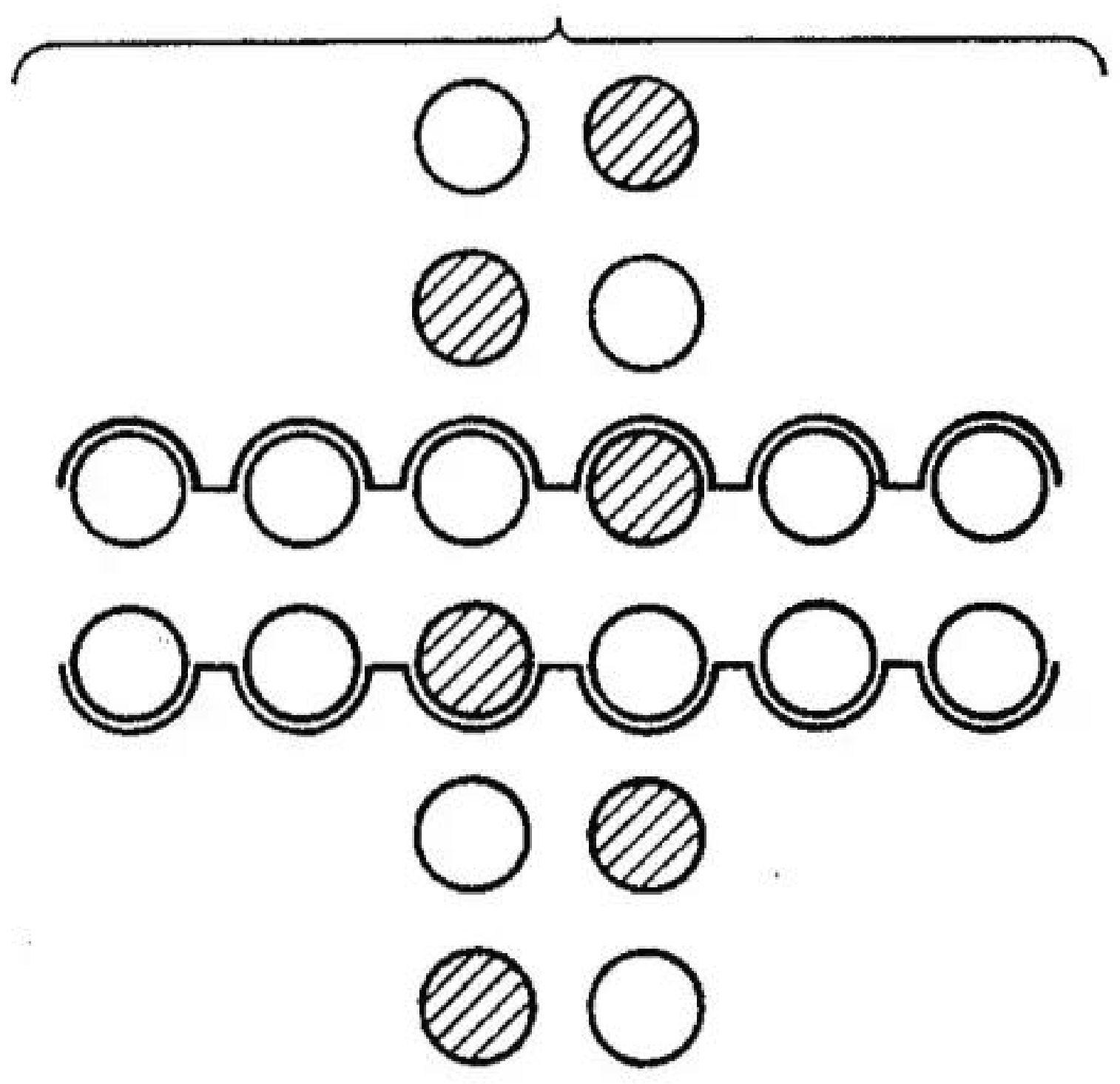

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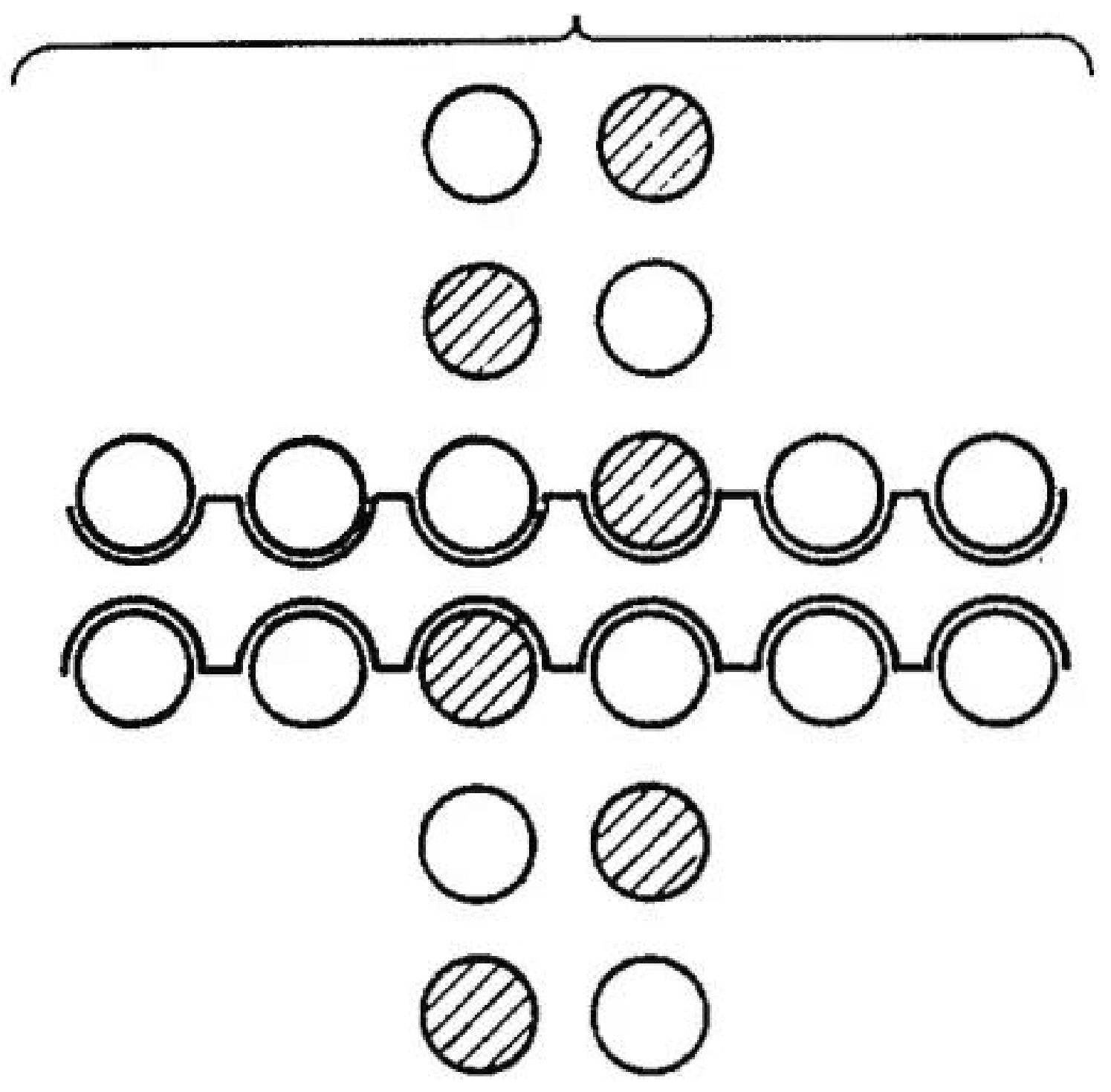

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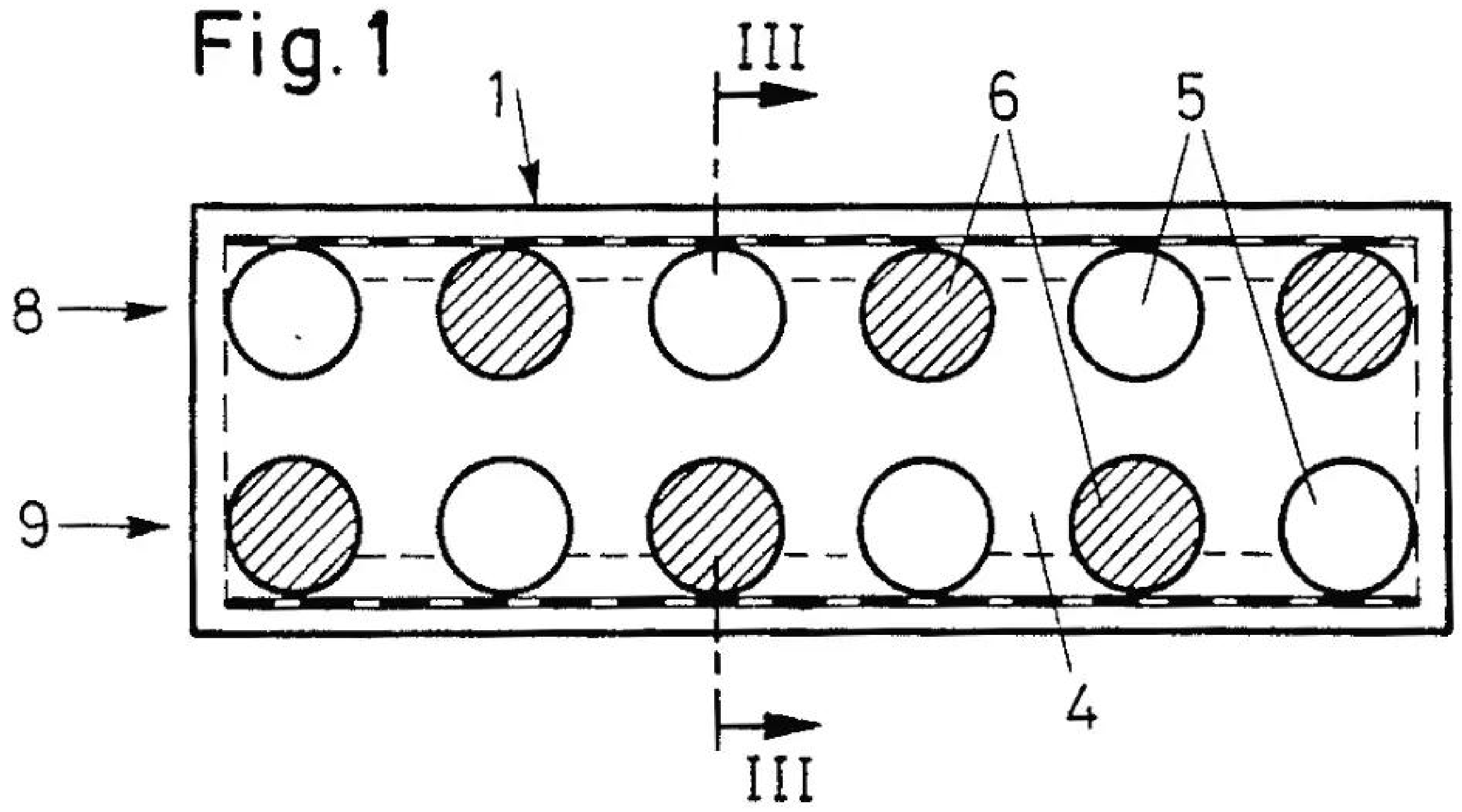
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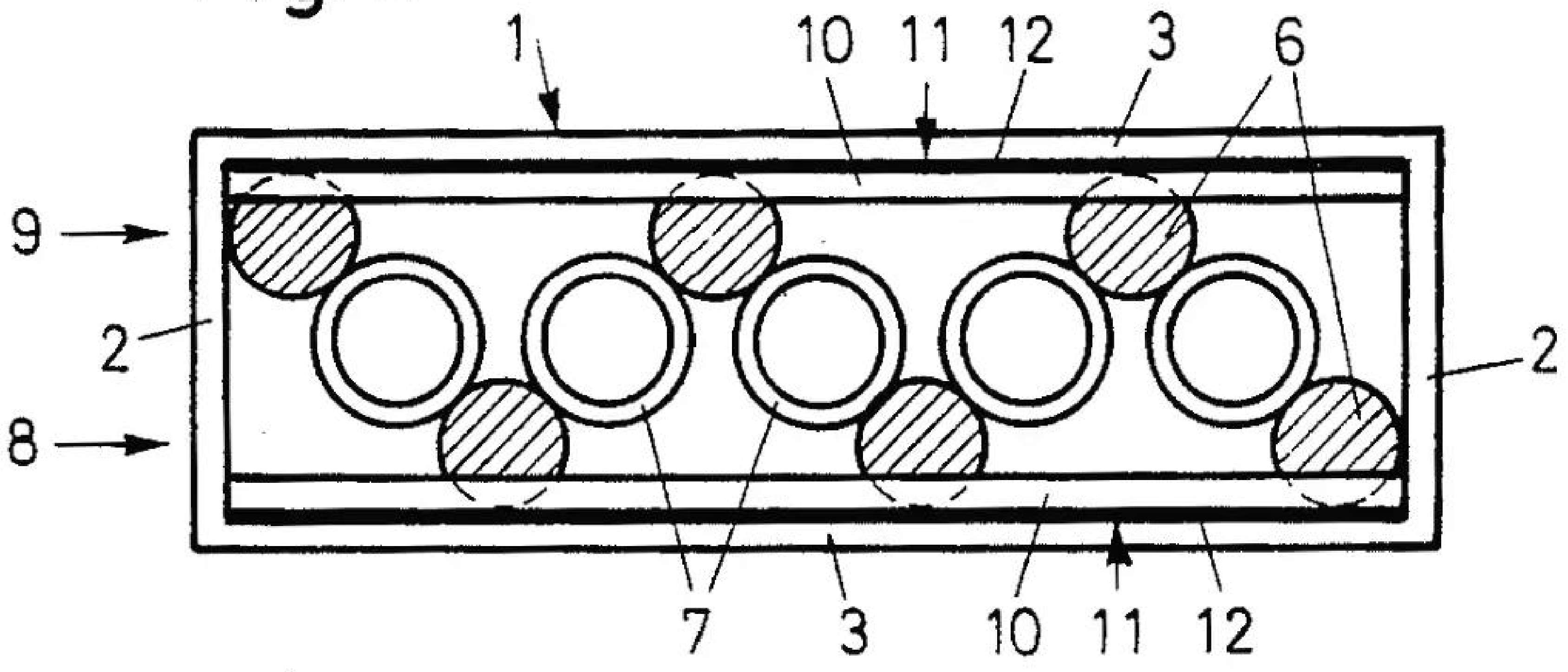
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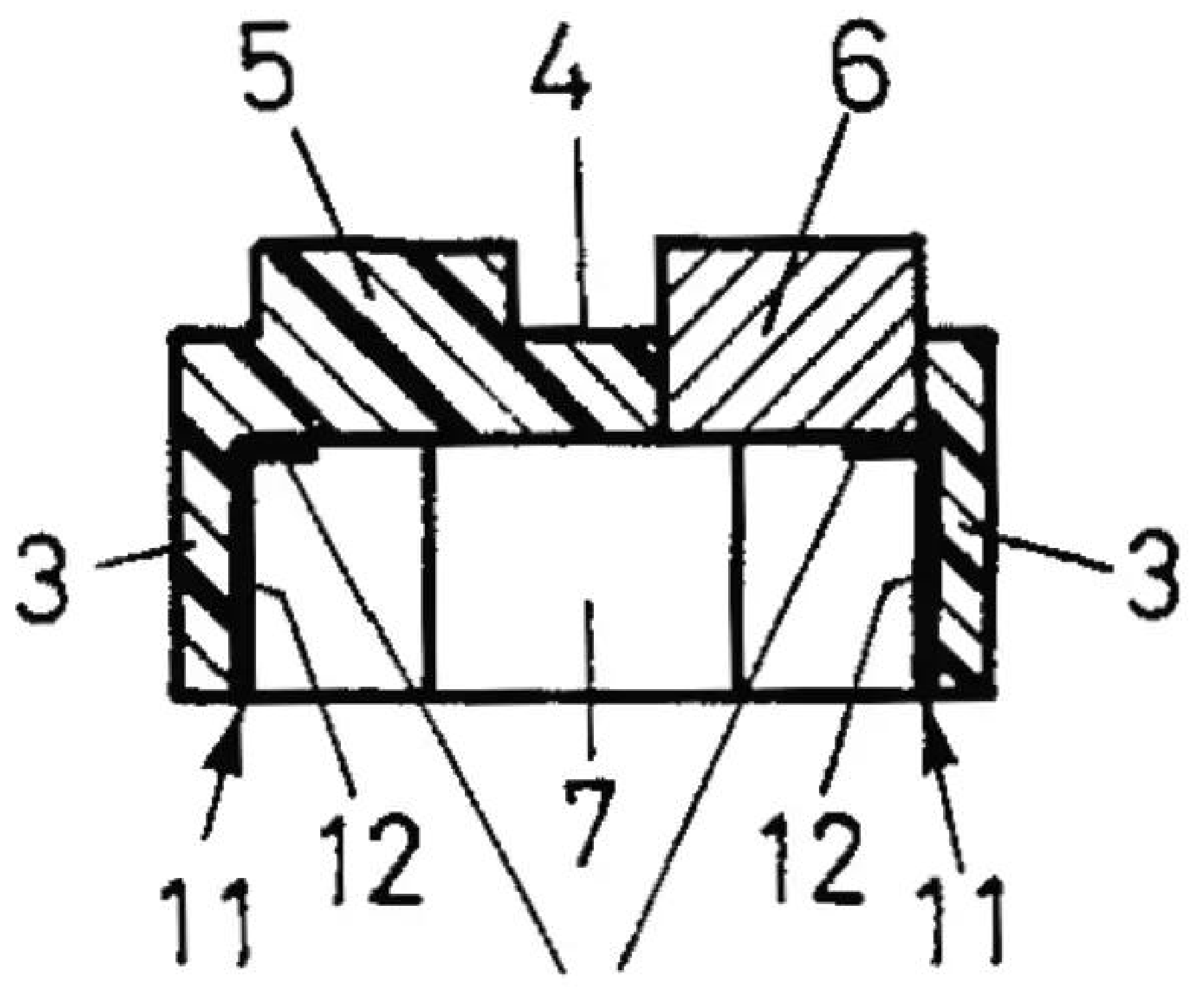
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Above left: *The idea was that conductive portions of bricks would only touch their matching type, no matter what the orientation of the brick was.*

Above right: *Options for the electrified plates underneath the first 1984 option and how current would pass from brick to brick in different orientations.*

Farthest left: *An illustration showing how bricks from different rows wouldn't make electrical contact in certain orientations.*

Far left: *A 3D view showing the option in which every other stud would be electrified.*

Left: *The approach from the first 1984 patent of electrifying every other stud.*

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LEGOLAND® Stad
En ny leksak varje dag!

The second approach proposed inserting curved conductive members in the shape of a crescent moon around half of a stud's circumference. On each side of the brick, these inserts would be on opposite sides of the studs. Such opposing orientations would mean that if studs of opposite sides of the circuit were connected, the metal portions would not touch. These crescent moon shapes would continue onto the brick's underside, where they would hook around studs of the brick below via a form fitting plate. Again, orientated one way they would connect their electrical portions, but in others they would not.

Ultimately, the second approach with the crescent shaped connectors was favoured. The patent documents suggest that some experimentation had already indicated this outcome. That second approach was more fully fleshed out and even included designs for SNOT style bricks, allowing for circuits in non-traditional orientations.

This crescent shaped moon approach is also the only electrical system reviewed in this series to make it off the page and into production. Bricks using this design, in very limited number, were produced during the late 1980s into the 1990s as part of the 9V system.

The LEGO Group released three variants – a 1x2 plate, a 2x4 plate and a 2x8 plate. The components saw limited use, dispersed amongst several themes including Town, Space and Technic. Their primary function was connecting 9V battery boxes to light and sound elements.

None of the sets that used them came close to approaching the original vision of fully integrated electrical circuits within builds. They were almost all novelties within their themes, with costs that were otherwise completely disproportionate to their size and piece count.

PHASE 4

The final design of the 1986 bricks was influenced by another pair of patents filed in 1985. Like their 1984 Phase 3 counterparts, the Phase 4 elements were designed to provide separate paths for the electricity to travel to eliminate short circuiting. These next two approaches sought to accomplish this feat in bricks without two rows of studs. Two approaches were proposed, both of which relied on prongs coming up through the brick's top.

In the first method, one set of prongs would have come up on the outside of the stud, with the other rising up through its centre. The remainder of the stud would have insulated them from each other, allowing separate paths through an individual stud. Because of this, it would have been possible to incorporate electrical pathways through SNOT bricks as well.

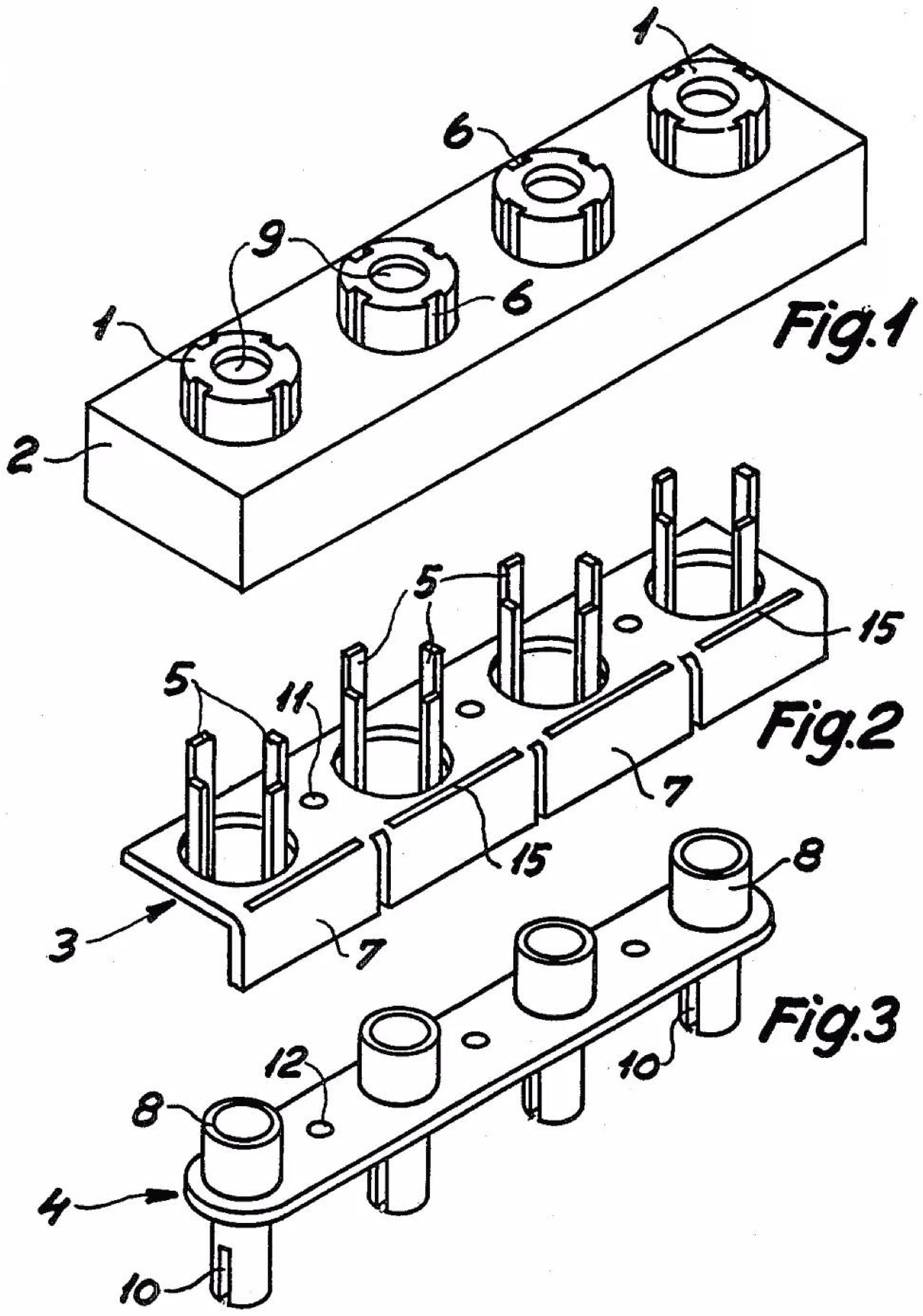
The second approach experimented with different orientations of a single conductor that would have come up through the stud. Thanks to their different geometries and positionings it would have been possible to pass current through a brick with only a single row of studs as well as multiple rows. The elaborate undersides of both Phase 4 proposals informed the final design of the electrical conductors mounted in the cavities of the three bricks that were ultimately produced.

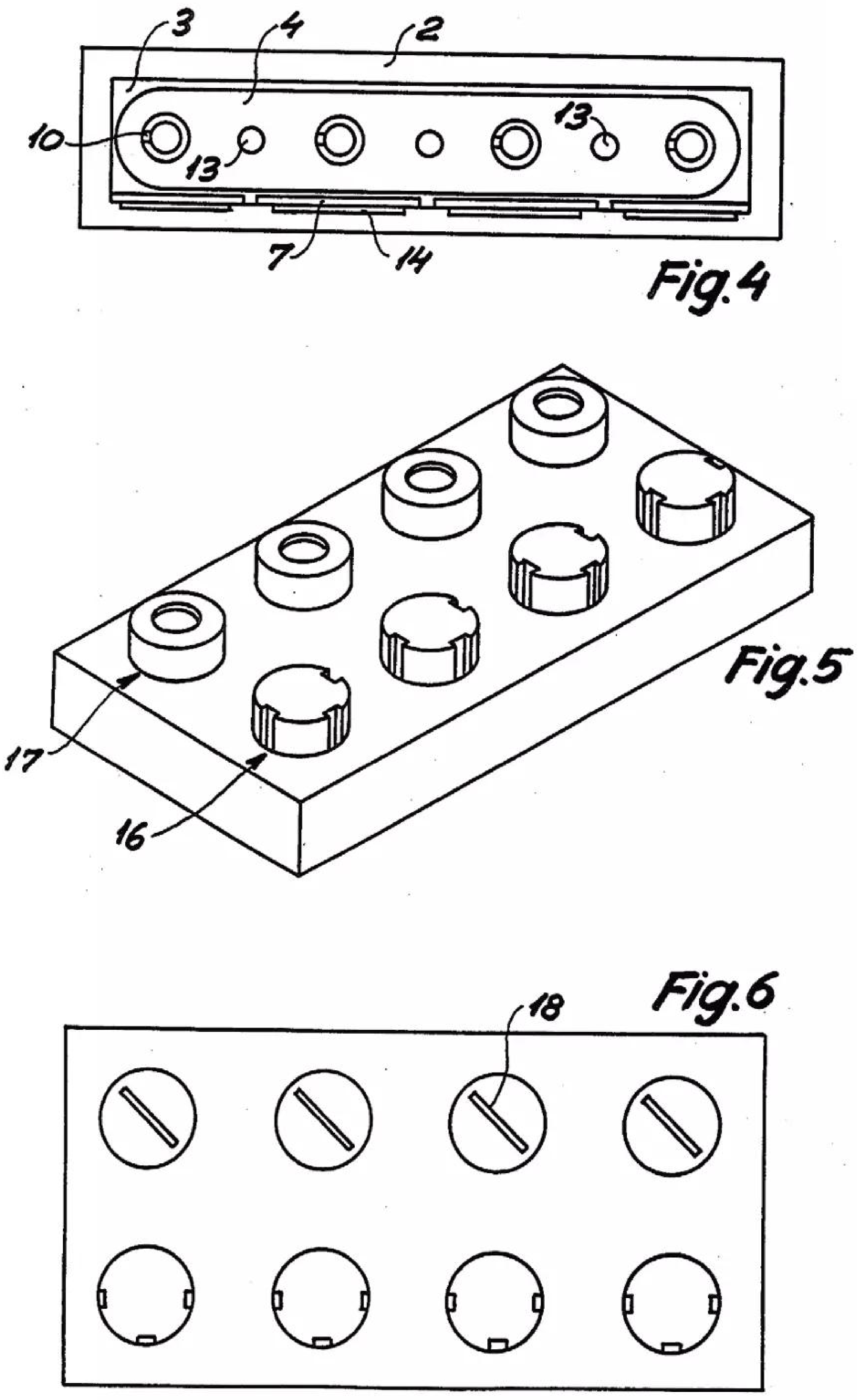
Once the pieces went into production, few sets boasted more than one or two elements and they were always just laid out in a straight line or stacked to pass power from the 9V battery box element to a nearby light or sound brick. The parts remained expensive to make and elaborate builds still found ways to short circuit, such as when a single stud was connected at a corner. That is why their use was so simplified in the few sets they came in; their versatility was limited.

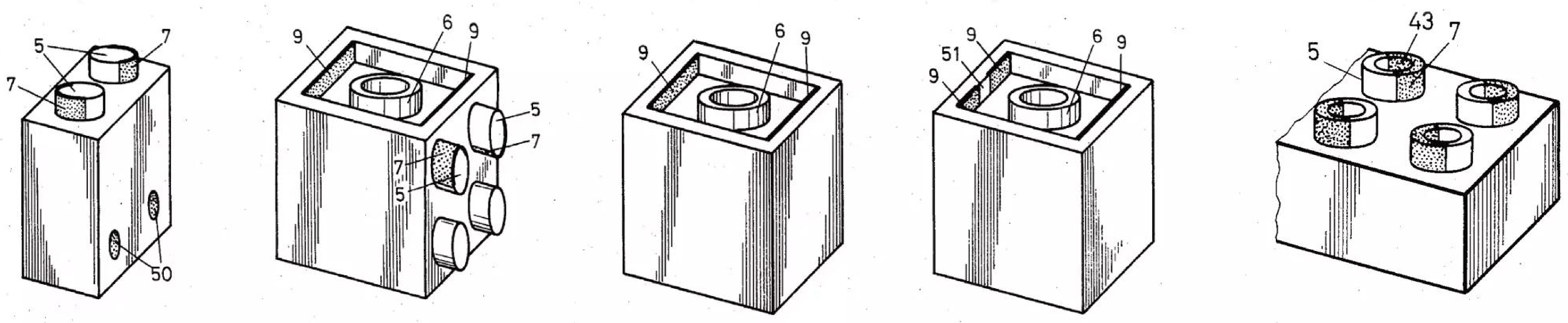
Above right: *Electrified bricks were finally produced in the late 1980s.*

Right: *One Phase 4 proposed a layered one stud wide system to create separate electrical paths.*

Far right: *The single stud wide system of Phase 4 was also adapted to a wider brick for completeness.*



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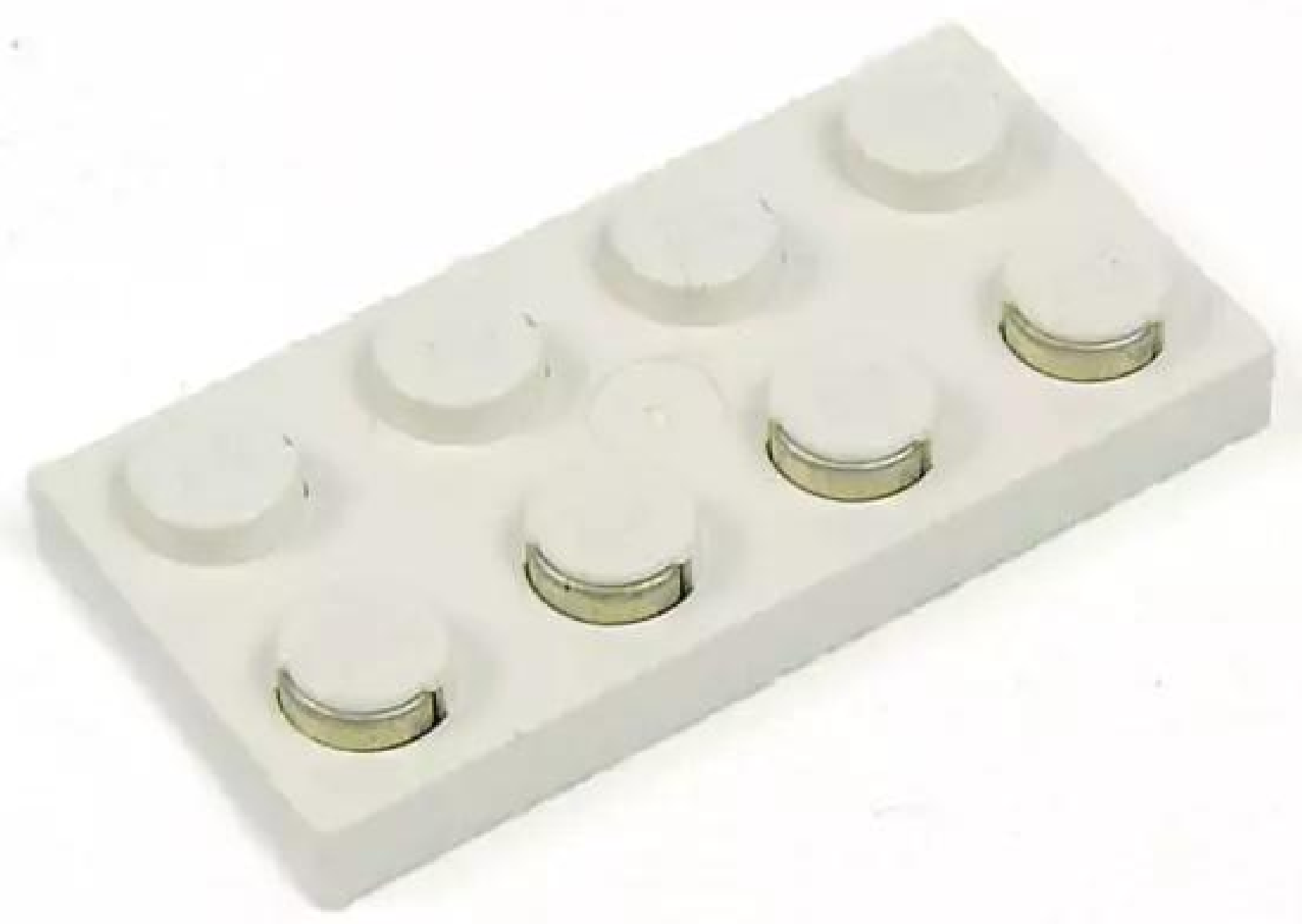

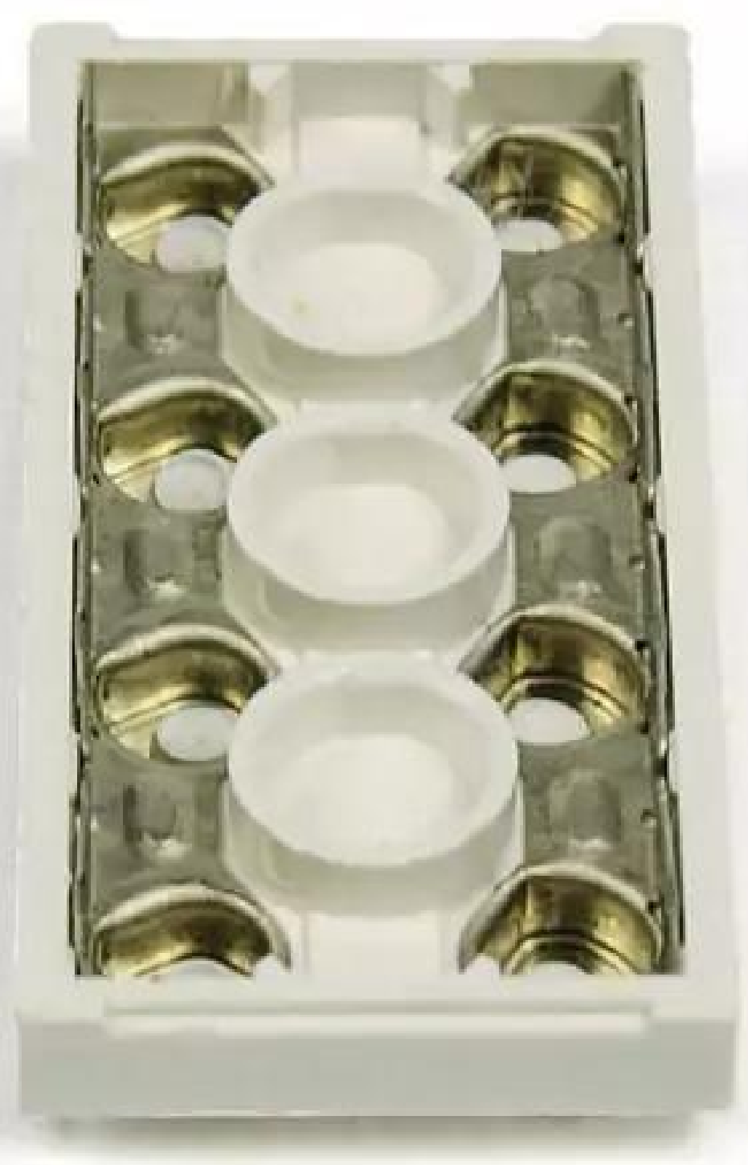

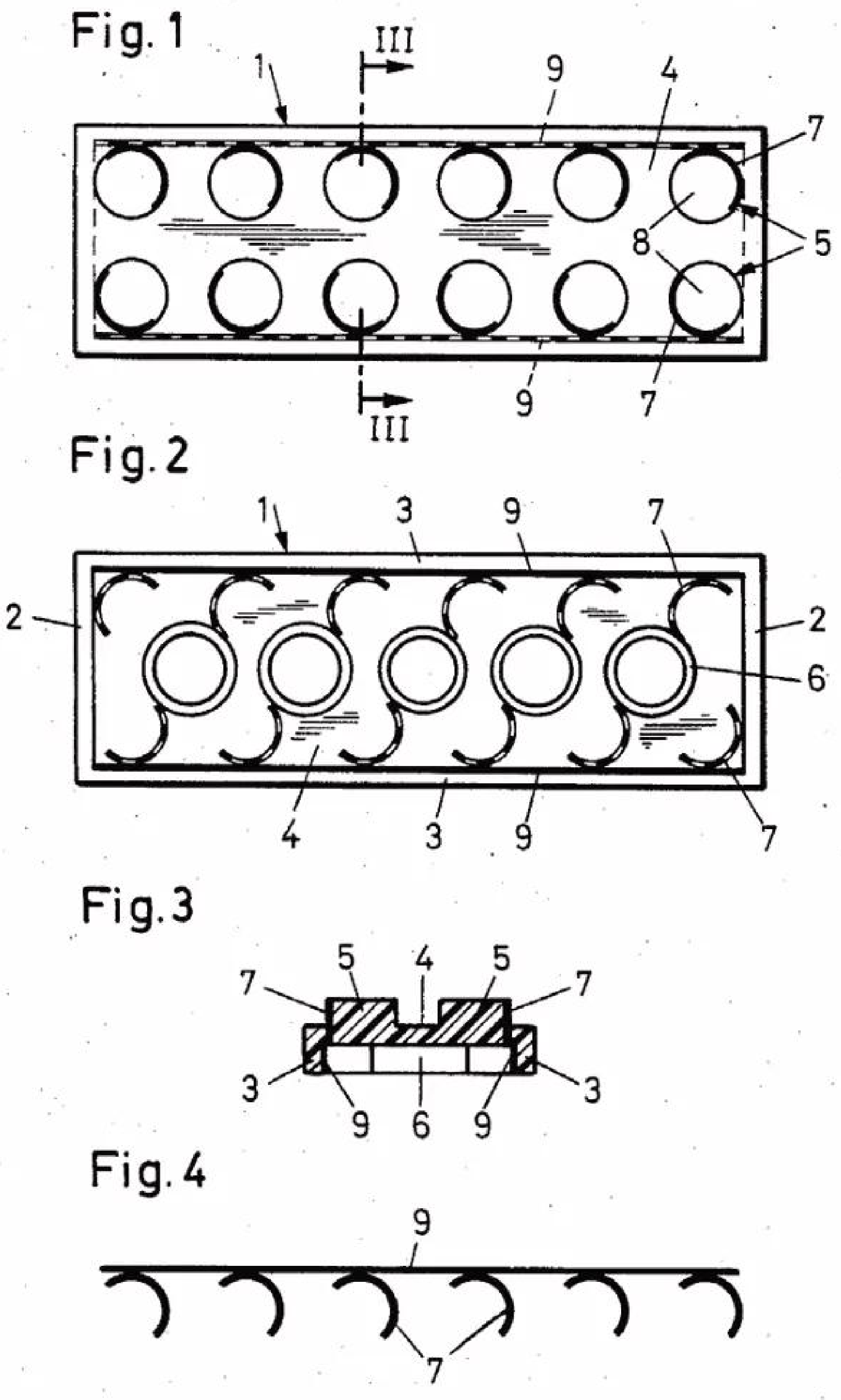
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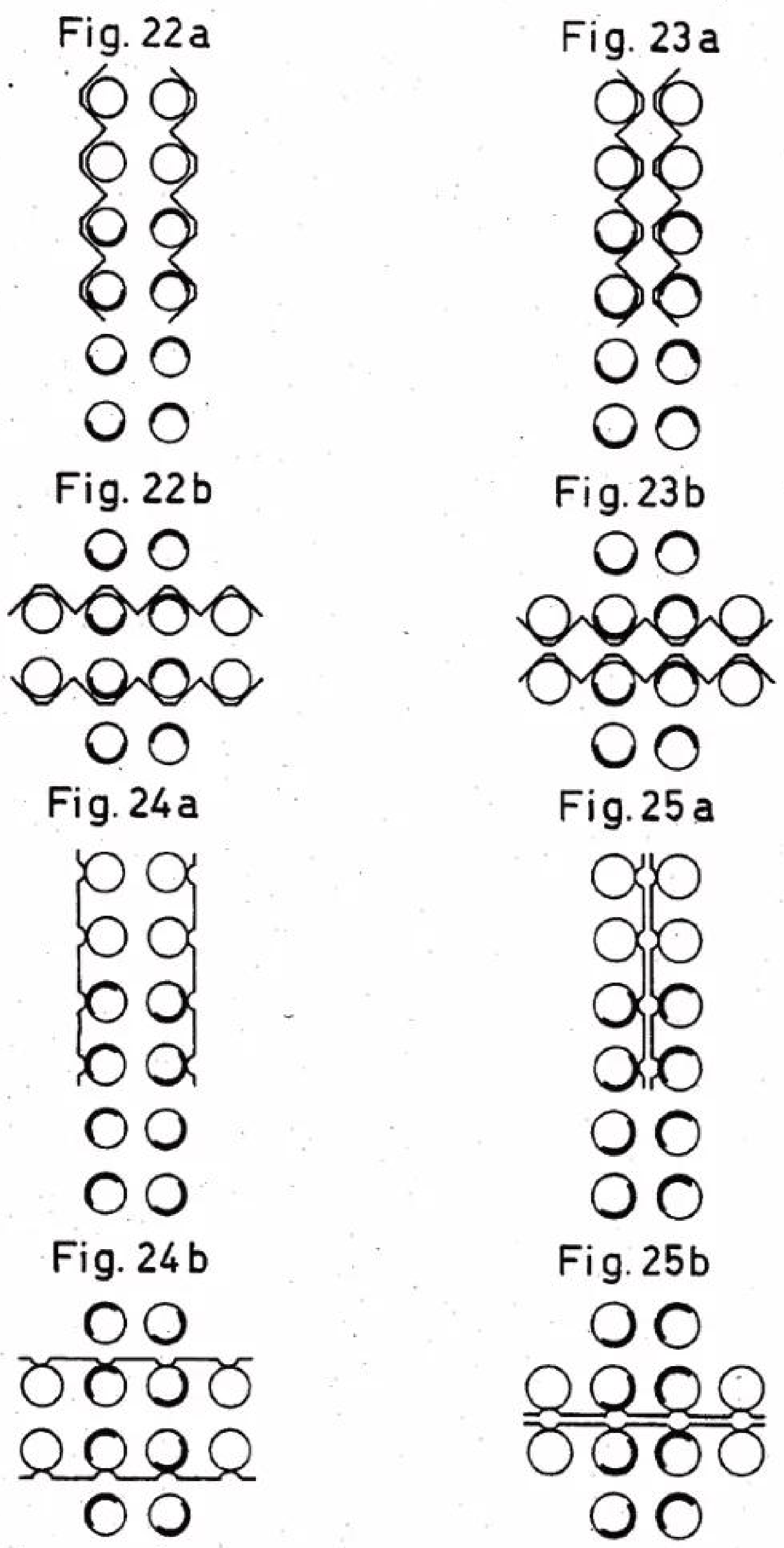
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Fig. 25a
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Fig. 25b

Above left: *Electrical SNOT bricks were patented, including one that could receive plugs.*

Above: *The opposite facing crescent moon conductors of the second 1984 patent.*

Farthest left: *Only three pieces launched from this effort, including the 2x4 electrical plate.*

Far left: *The crescent shaped approach to electrification in the other 1984 patent.*

Left: *Options for electrified crescent shapes underneath bricks in the second 1984 option, showing how current would pass from brick to brick.*

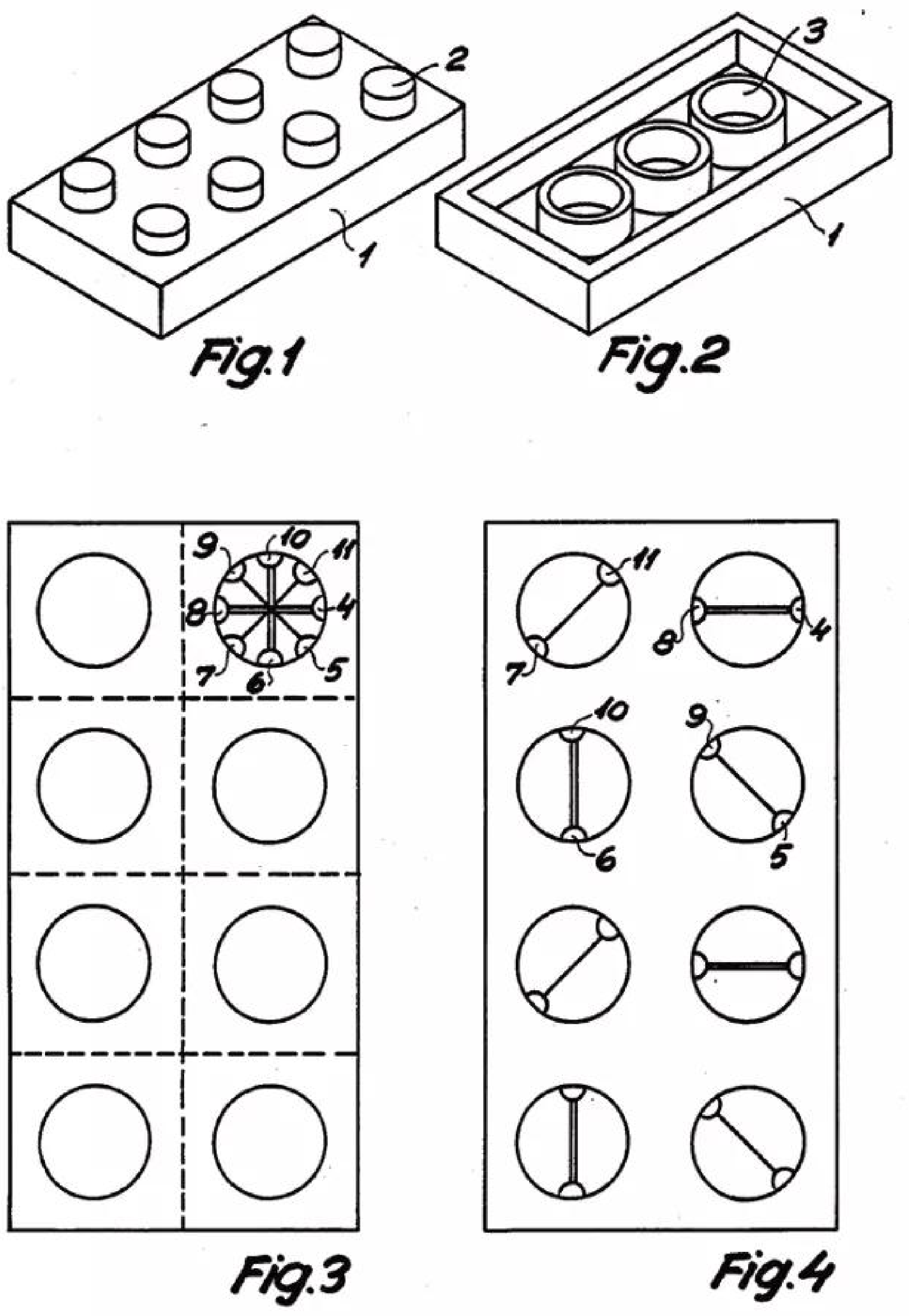
Below left: *The other Phase 4 approach used an elaborate system of rotated conductors in the studs.*

Below centre: *The second Phase 4 method used integrated metallic prongs and plates.*

Below: *Phase 4 was intended to give bricks versatility in conducting electricity as shown in these SNOT brick prototypes.*

Bottom left: *The pins would have poked through the bottom of the brick to make electrical contact.*

Bottom right: *The 9V battery has two rows with different configurations for the electrical conductors.*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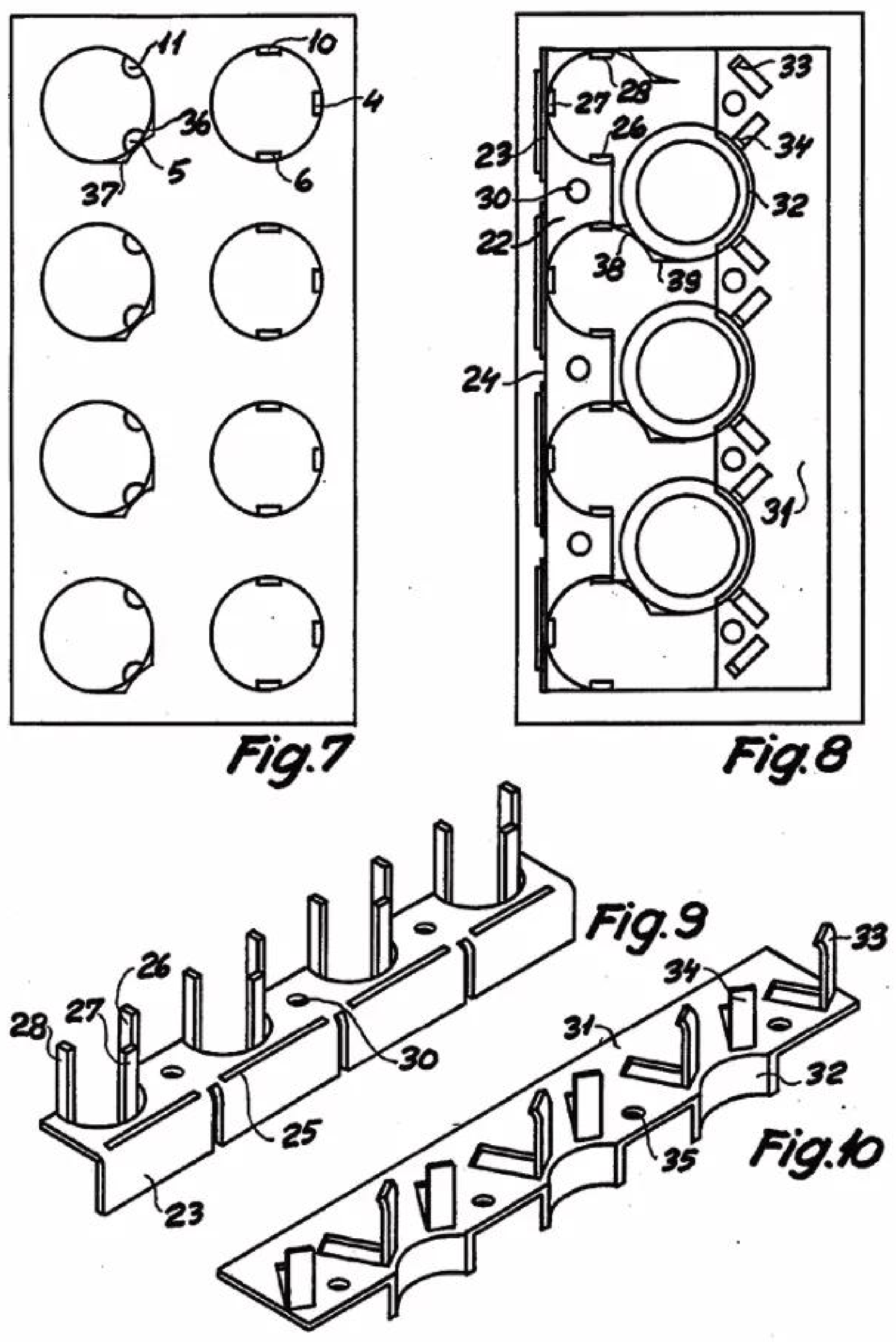
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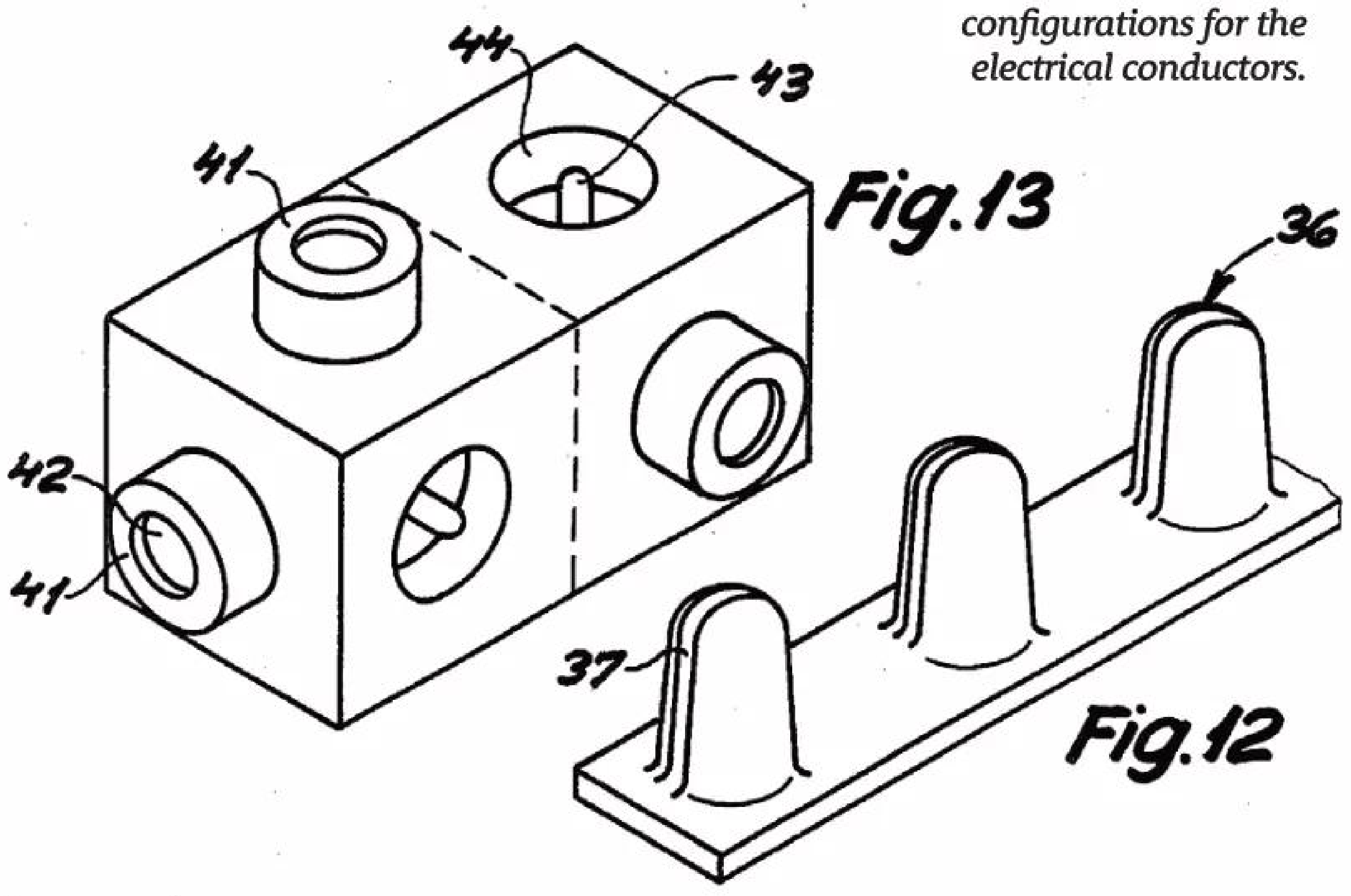
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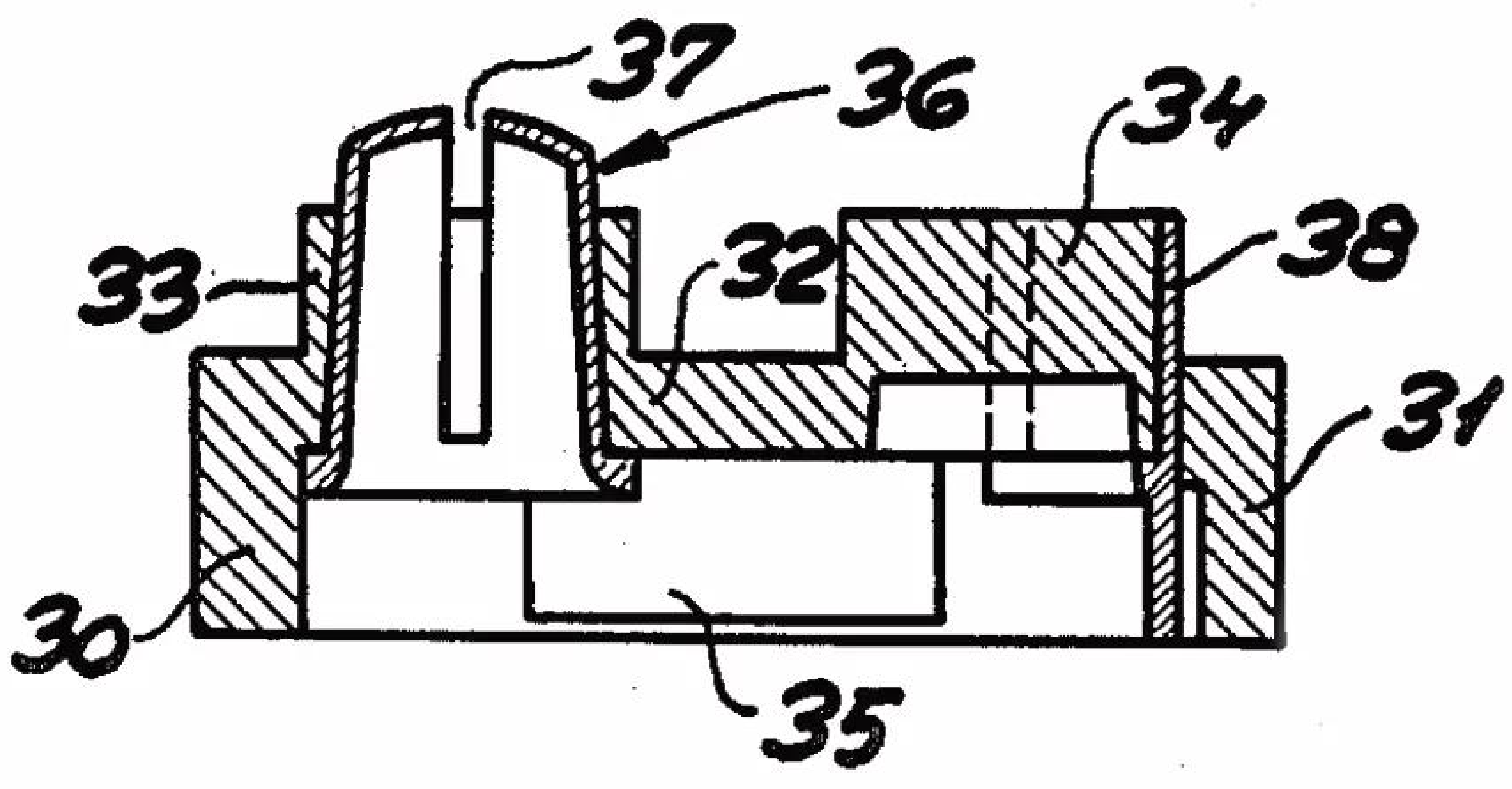
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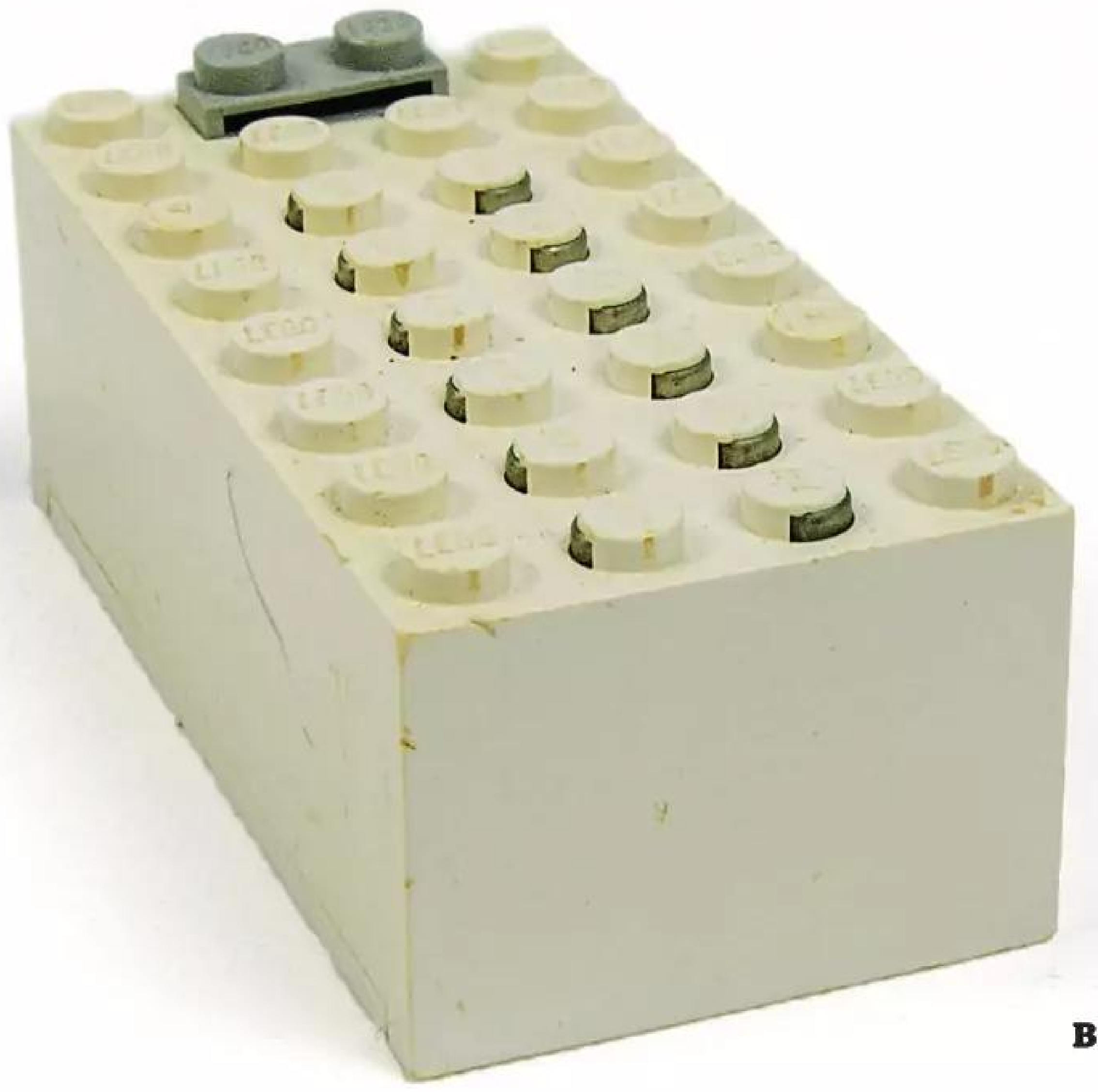
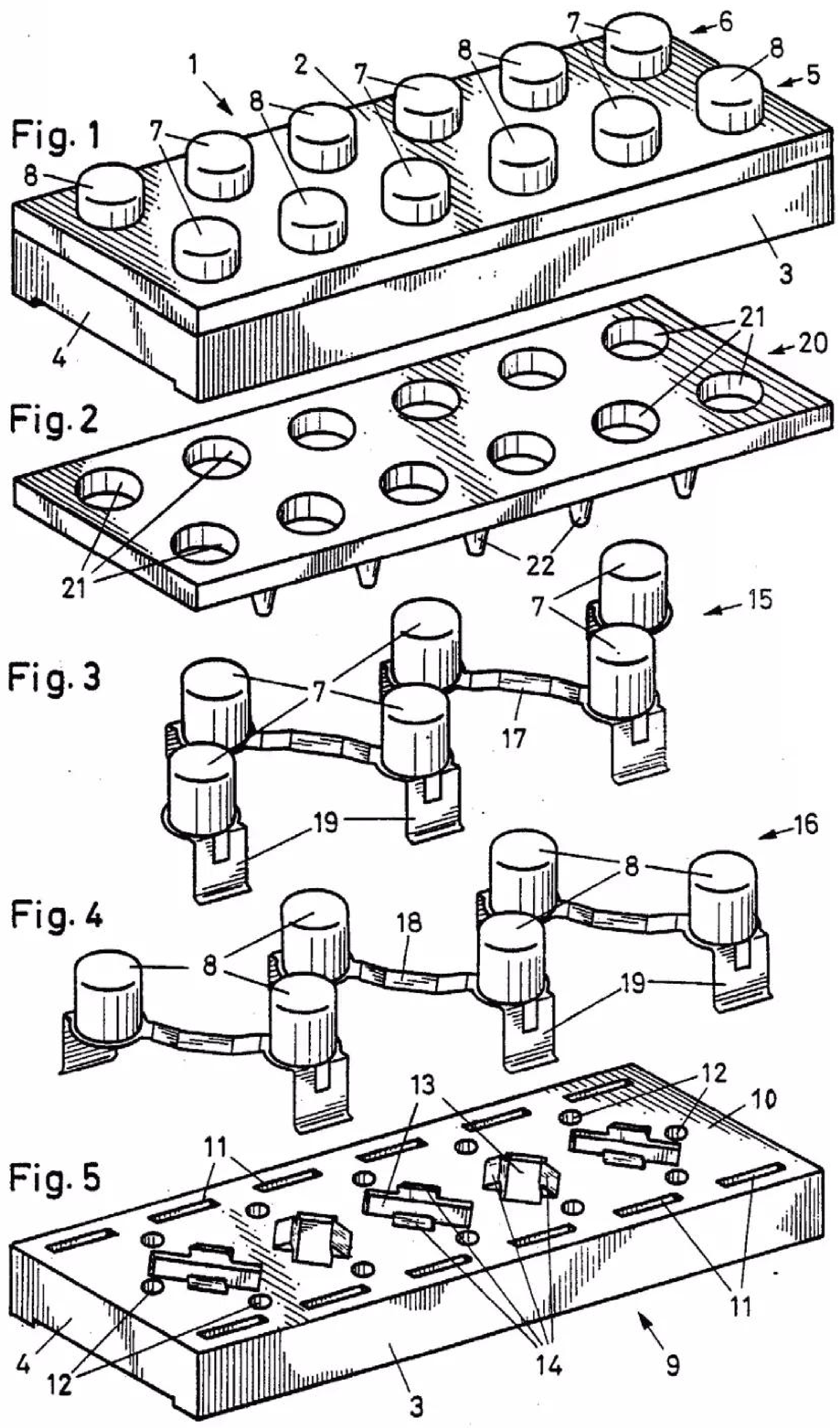
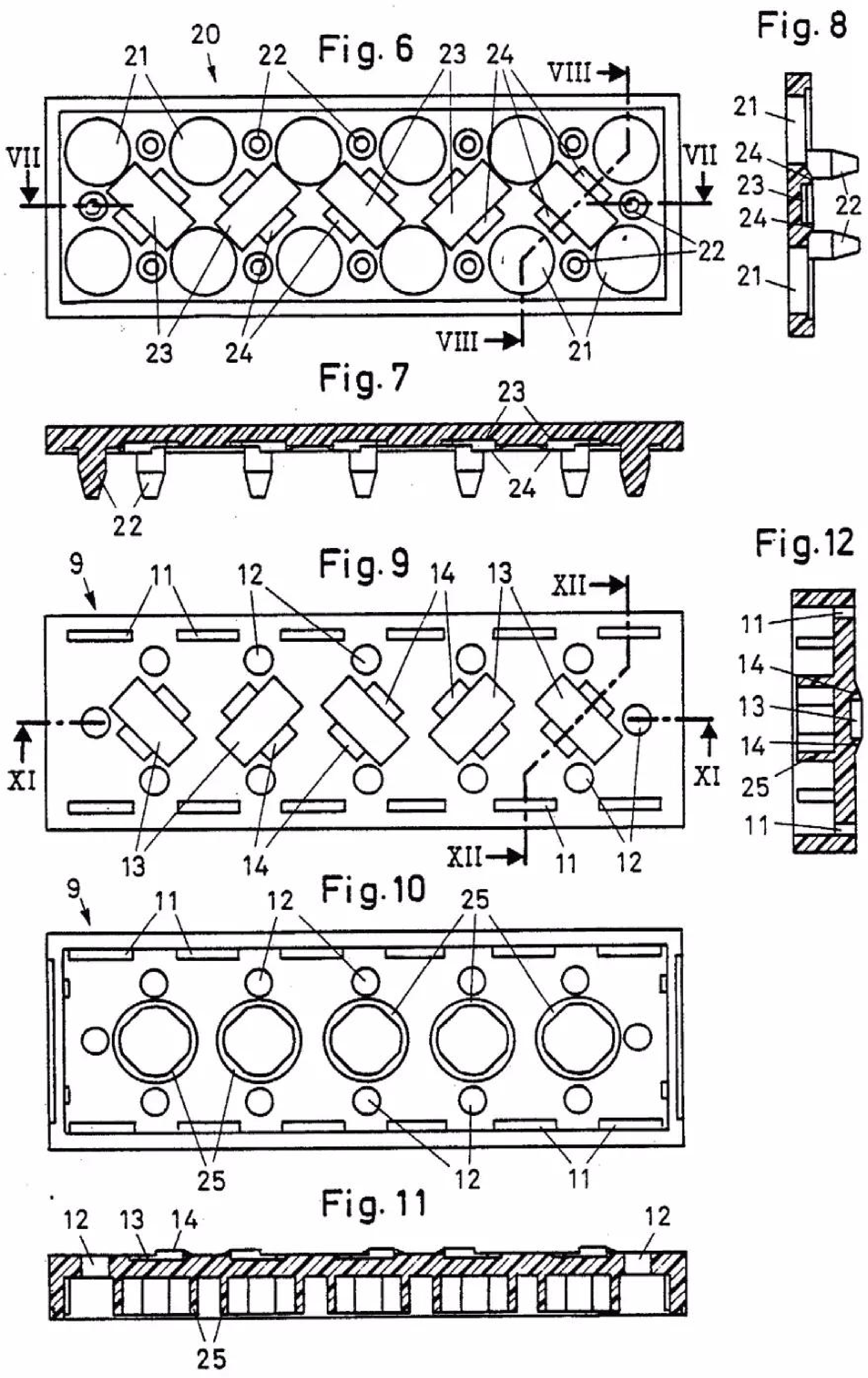


***Right:* The final integrated approach called for a single brick made up of five separate components.**

***Bottom right:* The Phase 5 brick would have incredibly expensive to manufacture.**





PHASE 5

Sentiment within the company was shifting away from integrated circuits, but not before the most elaborate of all solutions was proposed in Phase 5. It was filed in 1987 and it was called 'Electrified Toy Building Block with Zig-Zag Current Carry Structure.' The opening line reads: "A building block is provided comprising a support part, two zig-zag shaped conductive tapes connecting a series of coupling pins with conductive surfaces positioned on the support part and a cover plate". It only gets more complicated and confusing from there.

This approach would have eliminated short circuiting by incorporating different layers, each electrically insulated from one another, into a unique brick. Portions of each would poke through the other and the zig-zag orientation of the stud layer would have allowed for completely separate electrical paths through the same brick.

At this point in the process, it seems strange that time and resources were put into developing such a product. Clearly there was no way something so different from normal LEGO elements would have been cost effective to produce. It may have been seen as a next generation or evolution of the Phase 3 bricks. If the basic approach was popular, the LEGO Group could bring a second generation with more possibilities co to market.

A second possibility is that it was a pre-emptive measure to limit competition. The company could show a clear process of trying to make short-circuit proof brick systems. With this document they could show a solution to the problem in the event a competitor came out with a similar product. Ultimately, this electrical system was never produced.

PHASE 6

The whole process began with the desire to eliminate cables and now they were back, as confirmed by the name of the 1996 patent 'An Electrical Cable.' However, this was intended as a hybrid approach.

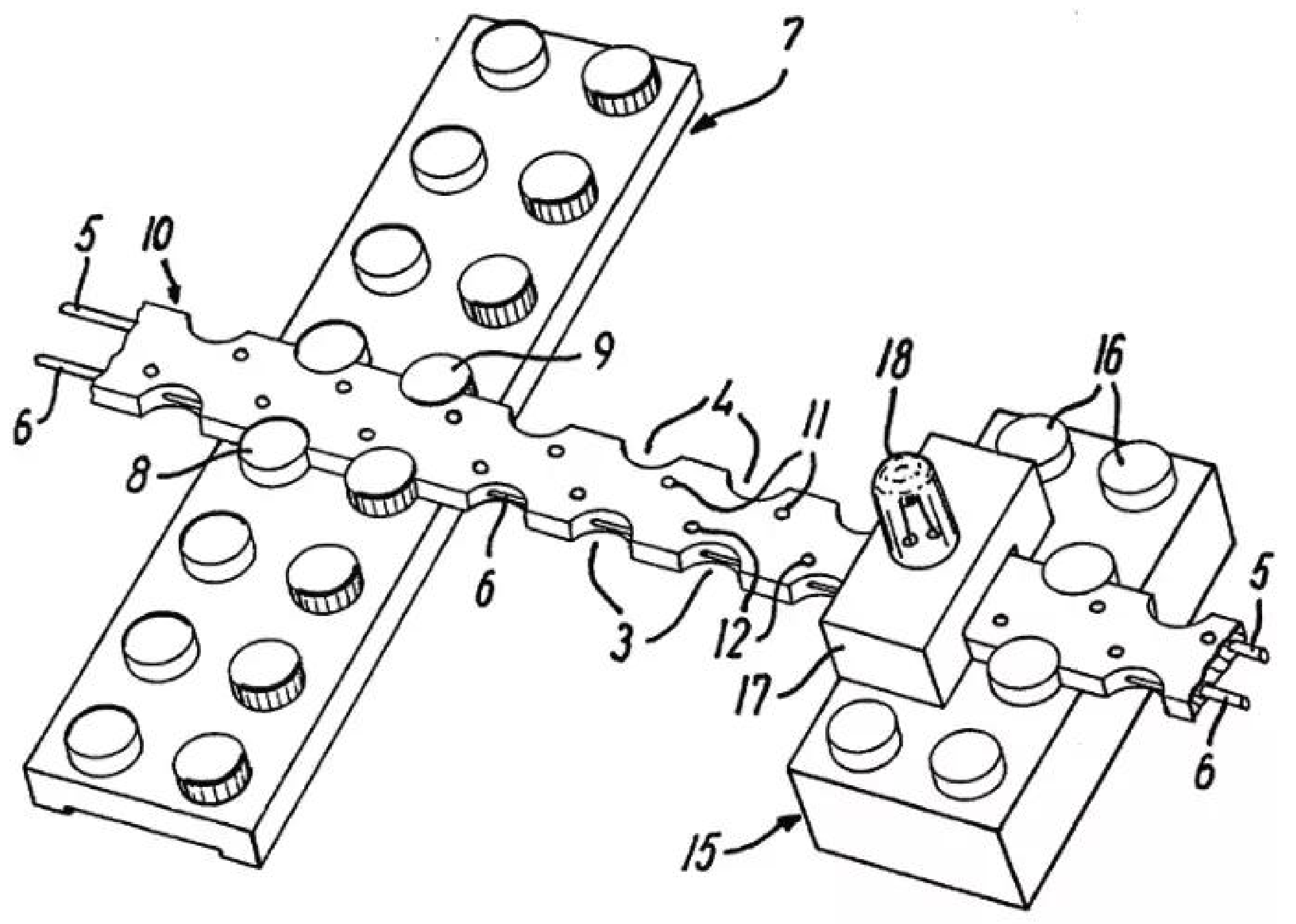
Like its predecessors, the Phase 6 patent begins by placing the current invention within the context of the company's larger quest. Notably, it acknowledges the new limited role that these types of parts play in the larger LEGO System, powering light and sound elements. It then references the Phase 3 crescent moon patent that was eventually produced and highlights the issues with those pieces – one being manufacturing costs.

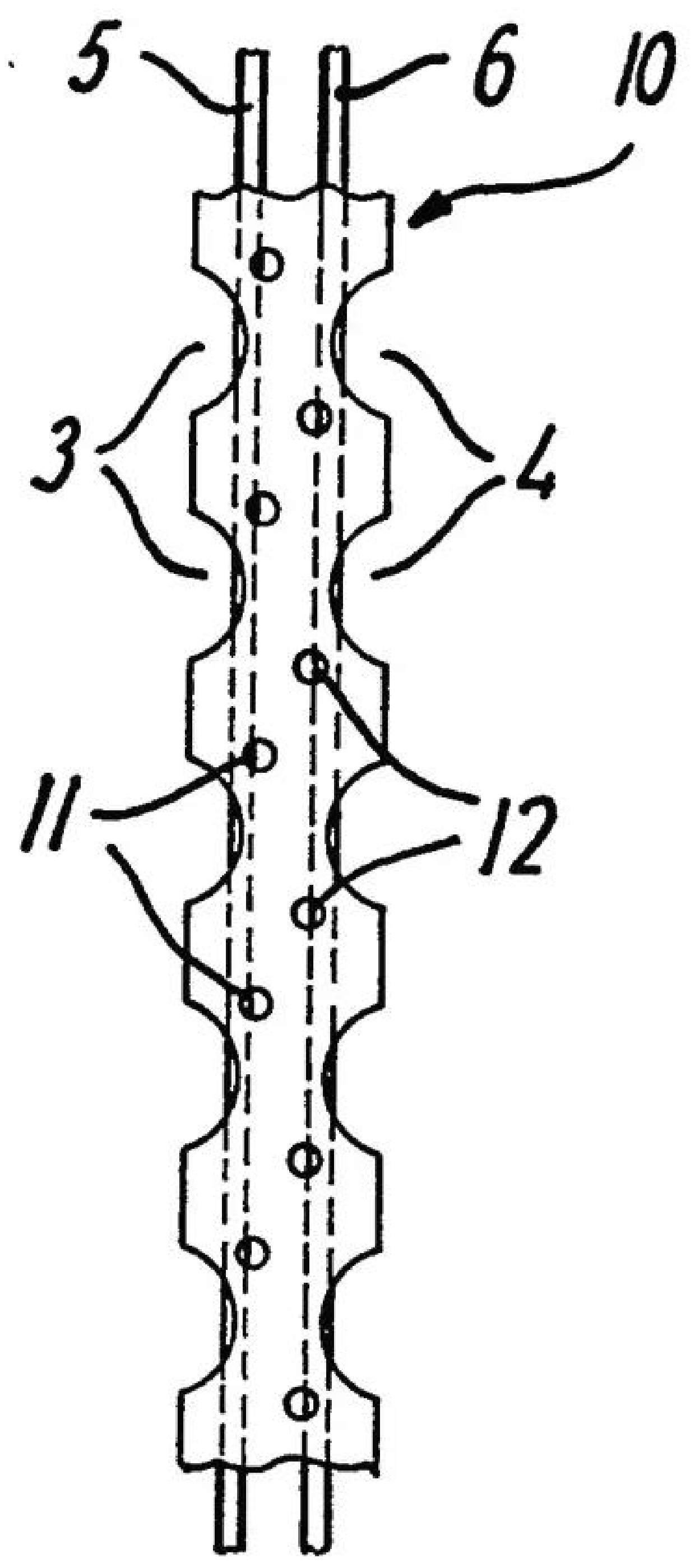
The other drawback is cited as voltage drop. When there is a distance between the power source and what it is supplying, the electrical strength can drop as current traverses the long path from one to the other. The problem is even worse when power must pass from one conductor to another as some energy is invariably lost to the environment during transfer.

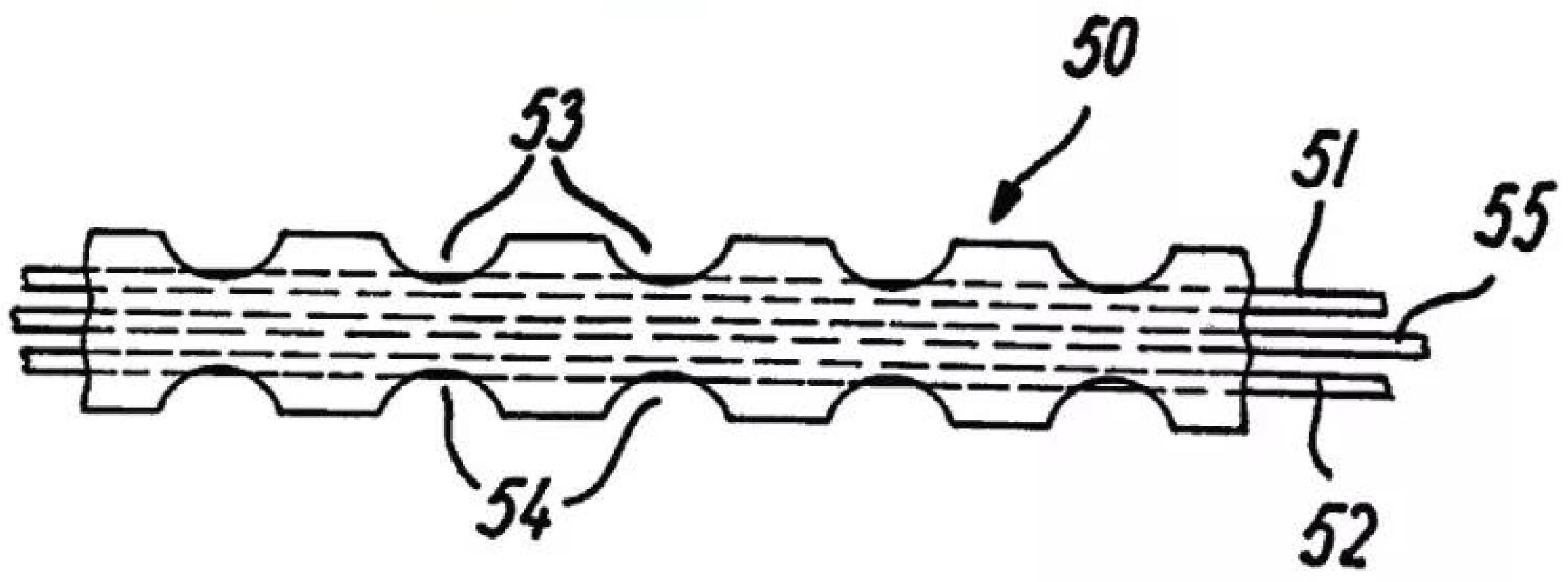
In practice, this issue can lead to dimmed lights or underpowered appliances. Apparently, designers were encountering this problem with power that snaked through larger builds across a long path of integrated bricks. The solution to such an issue is normally increasing the size of conductors, but this wasn't possible as designers were constrained to the dimensions of LEGO bricks. A light at the end of 20 electrified plates was going to be very dim, no matter what. Thus, it was acknowledged that wires were probably the solution.

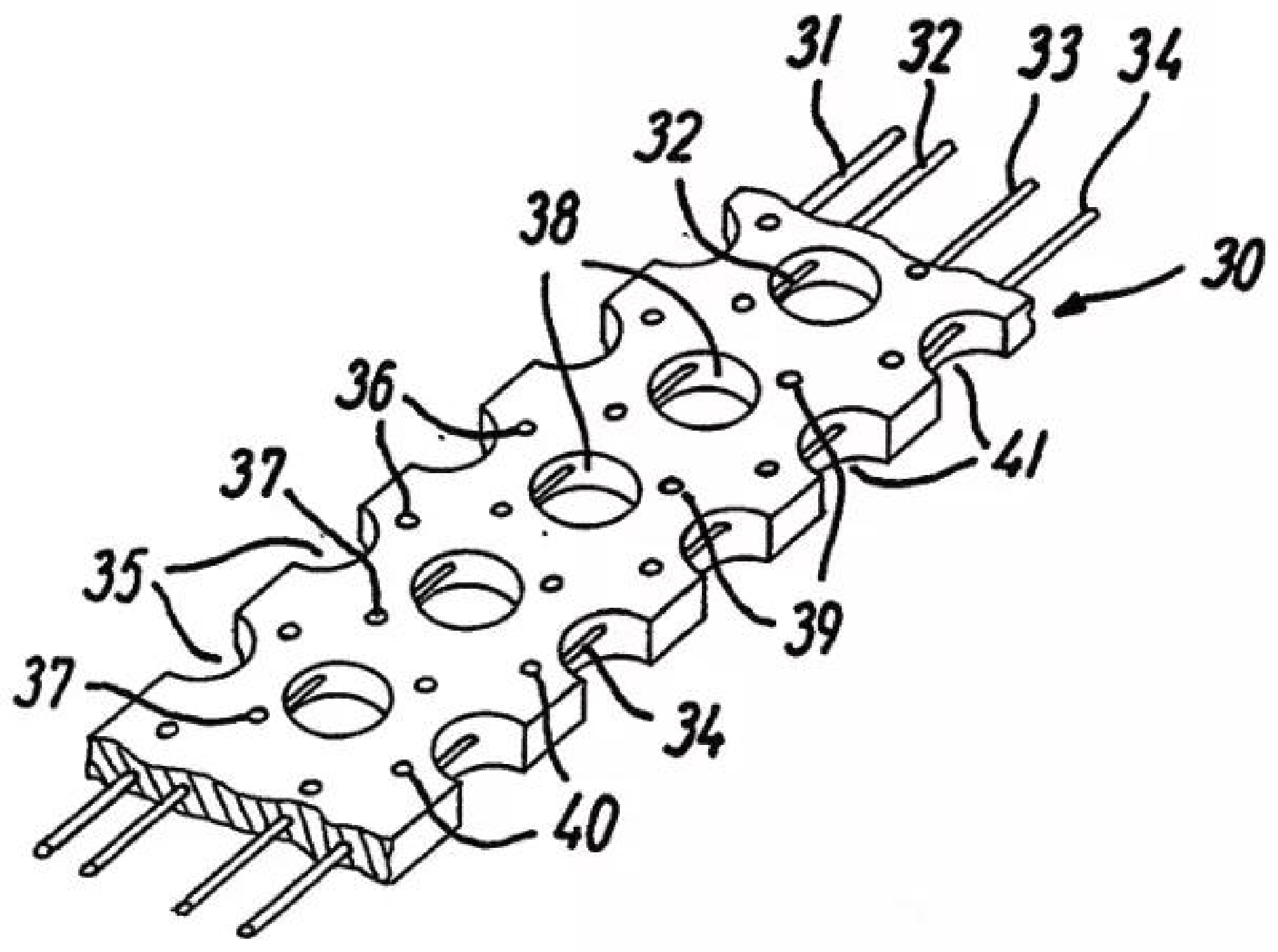
The dream of integration was not fully abandoned though. Three different wires were proposed – small, medium and large. Each included different types and styles of cut-outs designed to accommodate studs so that the wire could be hidden, as much as possible, within a build. Outer cuts would have allowed cabling to run between studs and holes would have allowed one type to surround studs. These different sizes would have allowed for greater numbers of conductors to be encased inside the wires, which would have either provided more power or electrified multiple components via a single wire.

In practice, these wires would not have been as versatile as the original vision. Since they had thickness and were designed to be held in place by studs, it would have been impossible to stack bricks on top of them. Instead, they were designed to run along the tops of builds, providing a direct path from power source to power user. Being able to attach to studs was supposed to facilitate taking the shortest possible path and keep them from splaying out from a buildand looking ugly.









Top row, left to right: *Learnings from the company's long effort were applied to a variety of specialty components through the years like the charger for the Racers theme.*

The Phase 6 patent acknowledges the role of these electrified bricks to power light and sound elements and proposes using a cable to do so.

The small wire has only two conductors.

Farthest left: *The medium wire is the same size as the small variant but contains three conductors.*

Far left: *The largest wire would have contained four conductors to power two different components.*

Below left: *Along with the wires, Phase 7 proposed two types of bricks to hide wires.*

PHASE 7

From then on, the LEGO Group focused on cables and the end of this long journey came in 1995 when a patent, referred to here as Phase 7, was filed. It proposed marrying the one plate element design that with a cable. An electrified brick incorporating the crescent moon shaped conductors would be attached to either end of a cable connecting the power source and power user respectively.

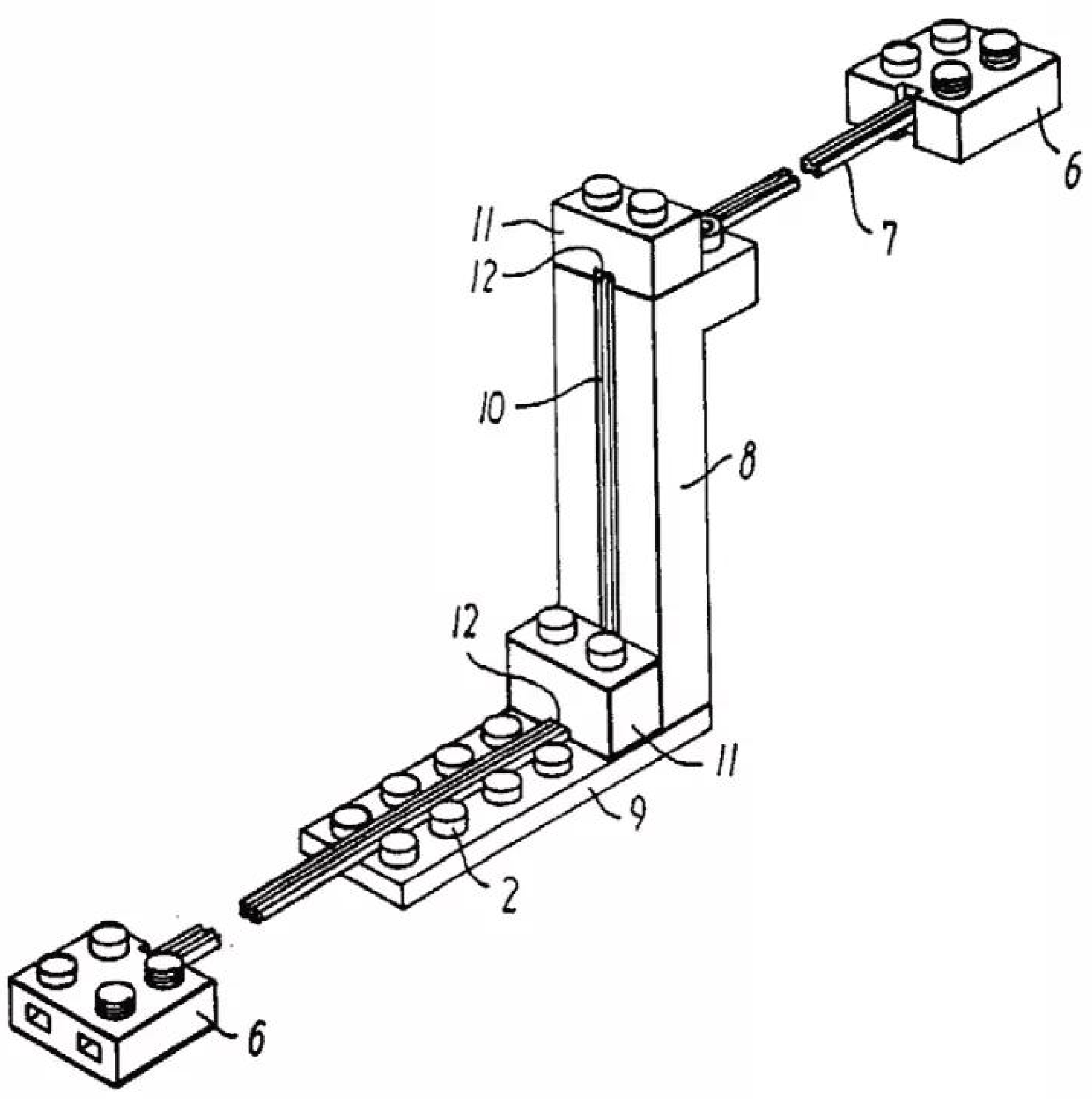
The elaborate designs to connect with or attach to studs were gone, but the dream of hiding everything was not yet abandoned. The Phase 7 patent included concepts for two bricks. The first, a modified 1x2, would have had a small cut out on two of its sides at the base. These would have allowed a wire to slip underneath, the brick both holding it in place and hiding it. A row of these would completely conceal the cable. Additionally, a vertical element was depicted with a groove up its side into which the wire would nestle. This part was produced and used in castles as supports and guides for portcullises.

While the use of a cable was no longer in question, what was still up for debate was its shape and cross section. To that end, the Phase 7 patent includes eight possible designs. The intent with these various approaches was to facilitate different functionality. In some instances, the objective was to allow the wires to be bent or folded, while in others a higher level of strength and rigidity was sought. The idea was that different applications would call for different types of components and cables, so all of them were safeguarded with a patent. As with most of the electrical options patented through the years, most of them were never used.

It is here that the long journey of electrifying LEGO bricks ends. Ironically, the final design implementation is not dramatically different from the battery boxes and cables included in the first train products that kicked off the whole effort during the 1960s. Through all of the intermediate iterations, the company found that little improvement could be made on that original design other than reducing the size of its battery box.

Phase 7's embodiment would go on to serve as the electrical system for the first generation of Mindstorms released in 1998. Even today, though the connectors at each end have evolved through Power Functions and now Powered Up!, the basic idea remains constant. A cable connects a power source to the item that needs power… sometimes simple solutions work for a reason.

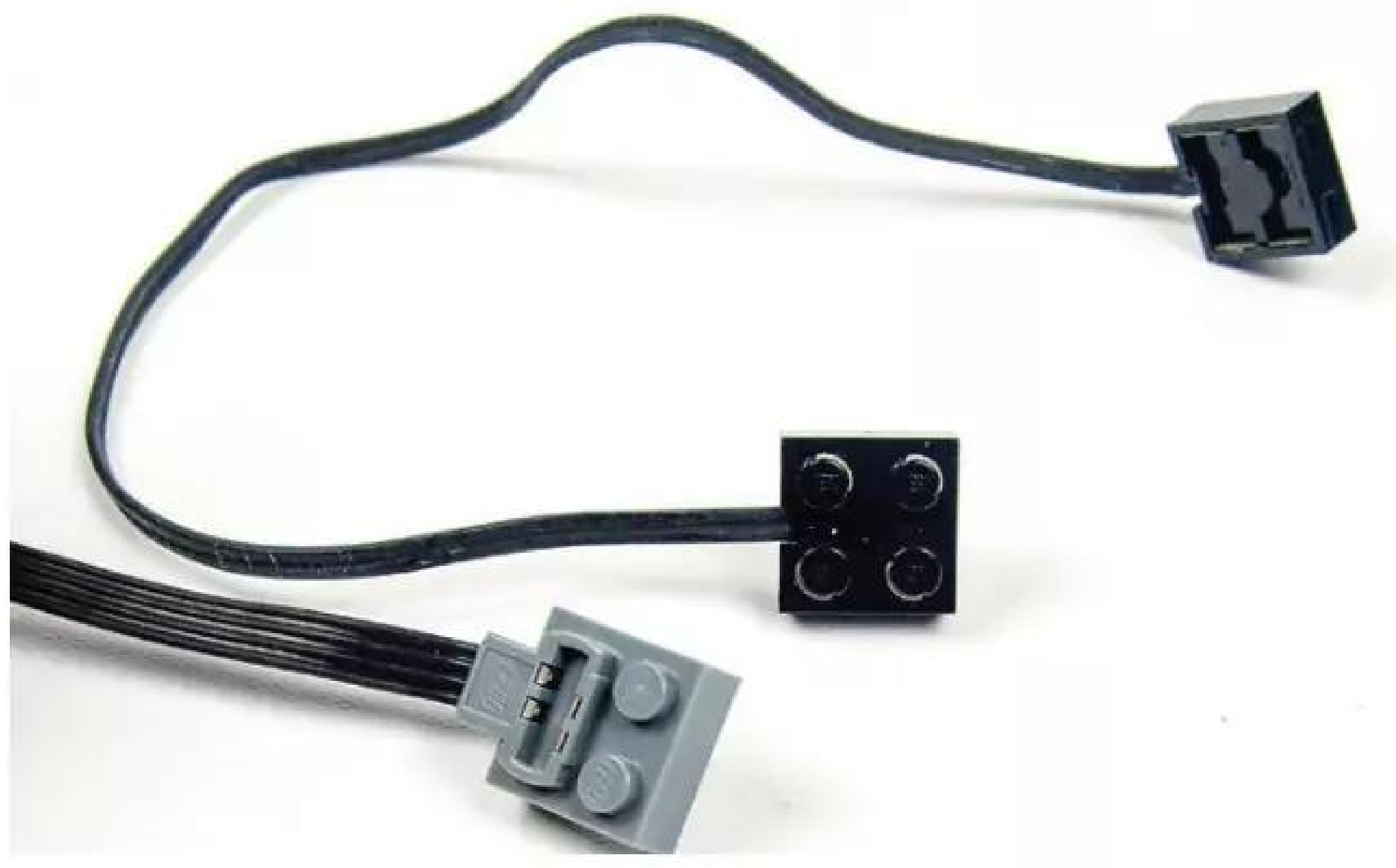
Knowing the LEGO Group's propensity for innovation though and the speed that technology is evolving at, it's always possible that the idea of true electrical elements could be revisited. ■

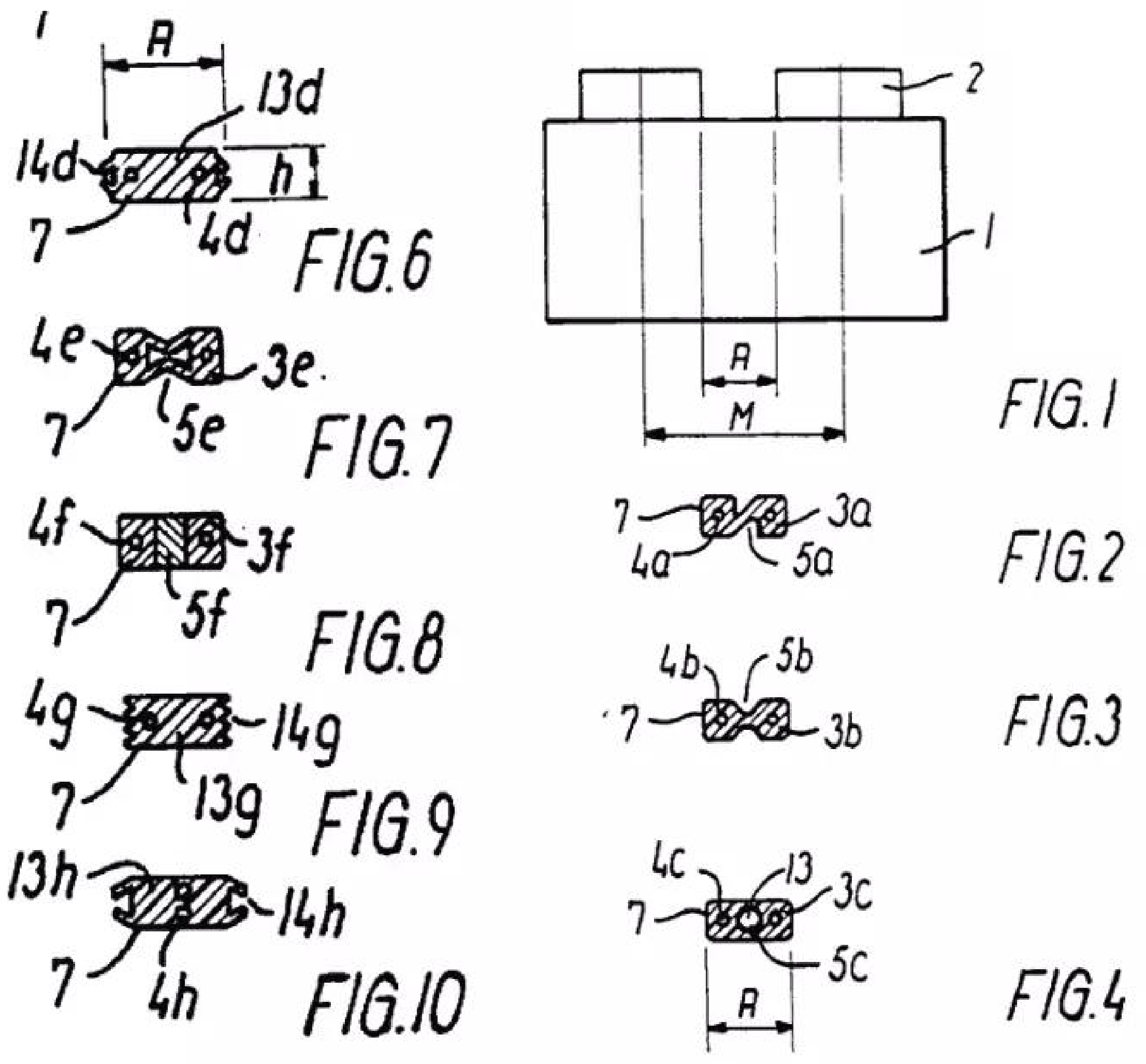


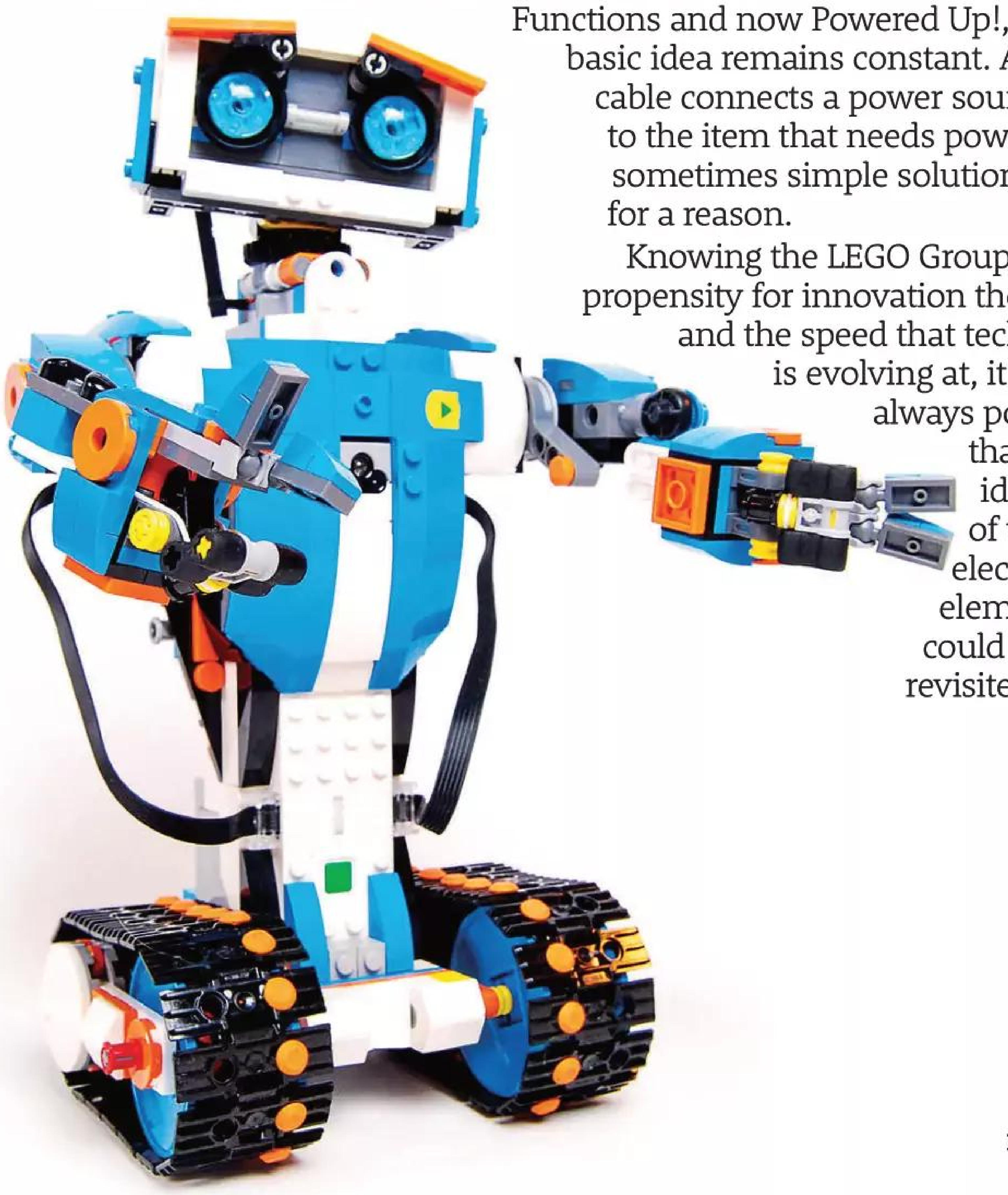
Right: *The end of this long road was the wire design developed for 9V which was ultimately given new life in the original 1998 Mindstorms product line.*

Below right: *A total of eight possible cable designs from the Phase 7 patent.*

Far right: *The LEGO Group uses electricity in ever more impressive ways as the years go on, as illustrated by a set like 17101 Boost Creative Toolbox.*







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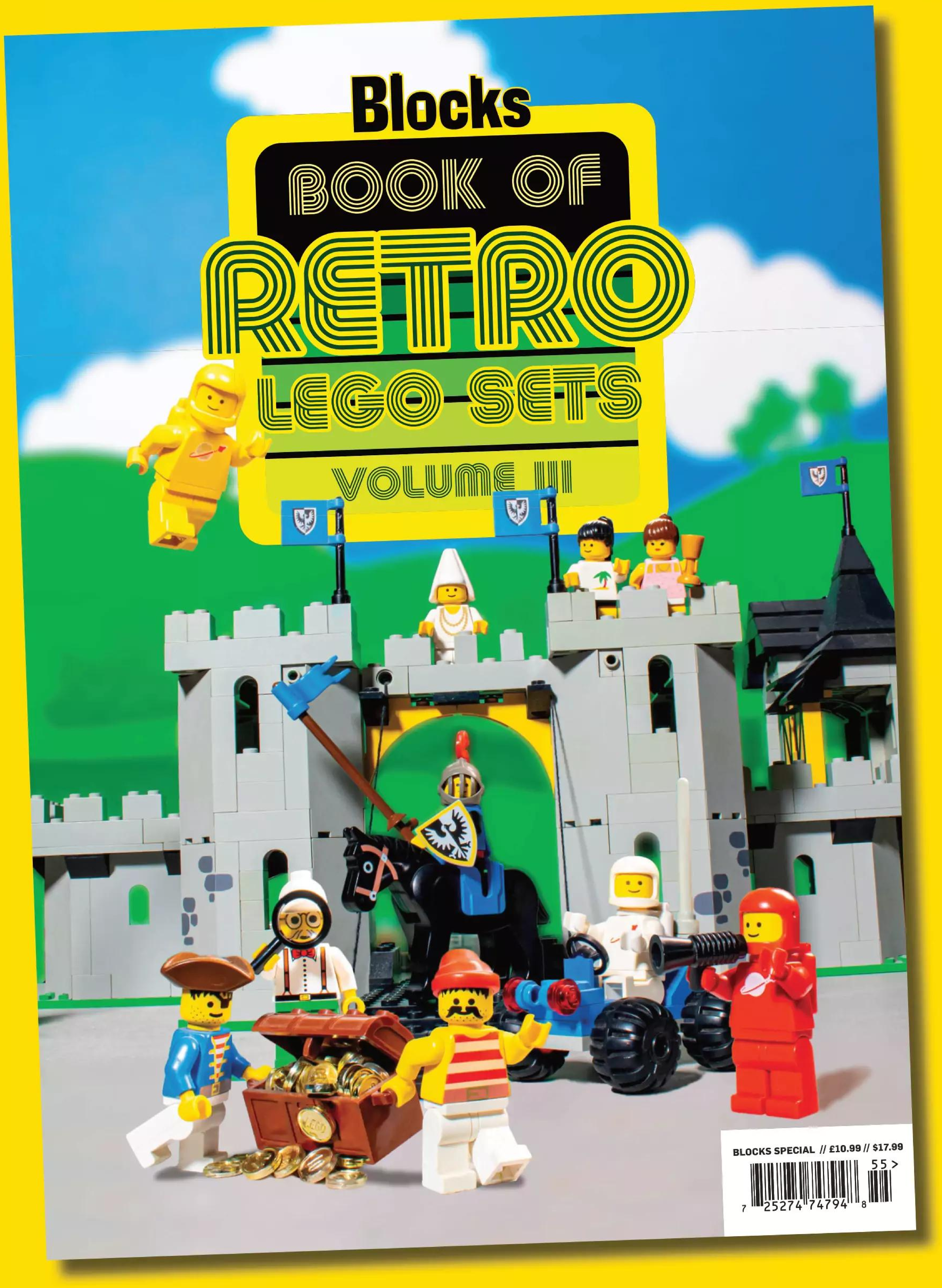

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10356

Theme: *Icons* / ***Price:*** *£349.99, $399.99, €379.99* /
Recommended age: *18+* / ***Pieces:*** *3,600* / ***Minifigures:*** *9*

Star Trek Enterprise

The impossible collaboration has finally happened and fans can build their own LEGO Enterprise. Was it worth waiting for?

GET THIS IF YOU LIKED

75192 Millennium Falcon

If you collect massive LEGO spaceships that demand acres of shelf space to display, then the Enterprise will fit nicely alongside the Falcon in your presumably massive LEGO vault. The Enterprise doesn't have the same intricate internal details as the Falcon, but if you love iconic spacecraft, then your collection will not be complete without both.

10318 Concorde

10356 Star Trek Enterprise has some similarities with 10318 Concorde when it comes to the build process and the clever techniques used. Admittedly, there is more technical accuracy in the Concorde due to it not being fictional, but if you enjoy the build process as much as seeing the end result then the Enterprise could be one to consider.

10300 Back to the Future Time Machine

Where we're boldly going, we don't need warp drives. There are plenty of nostalgic LEGO sets but for those who enjoyed the complex technical build of the Back to the Future Time Machine, the Enterprise will tick that box – and of course provide an excuse to watch a classic while you're building it.

For decades, the final frontier of brick-building has felt frustratingly out of reach. While countless AFOLs have tried their hand at replicating the Federation's starships, an official, licensed LEGO model of the USS Enterprise remained a dream… until now.

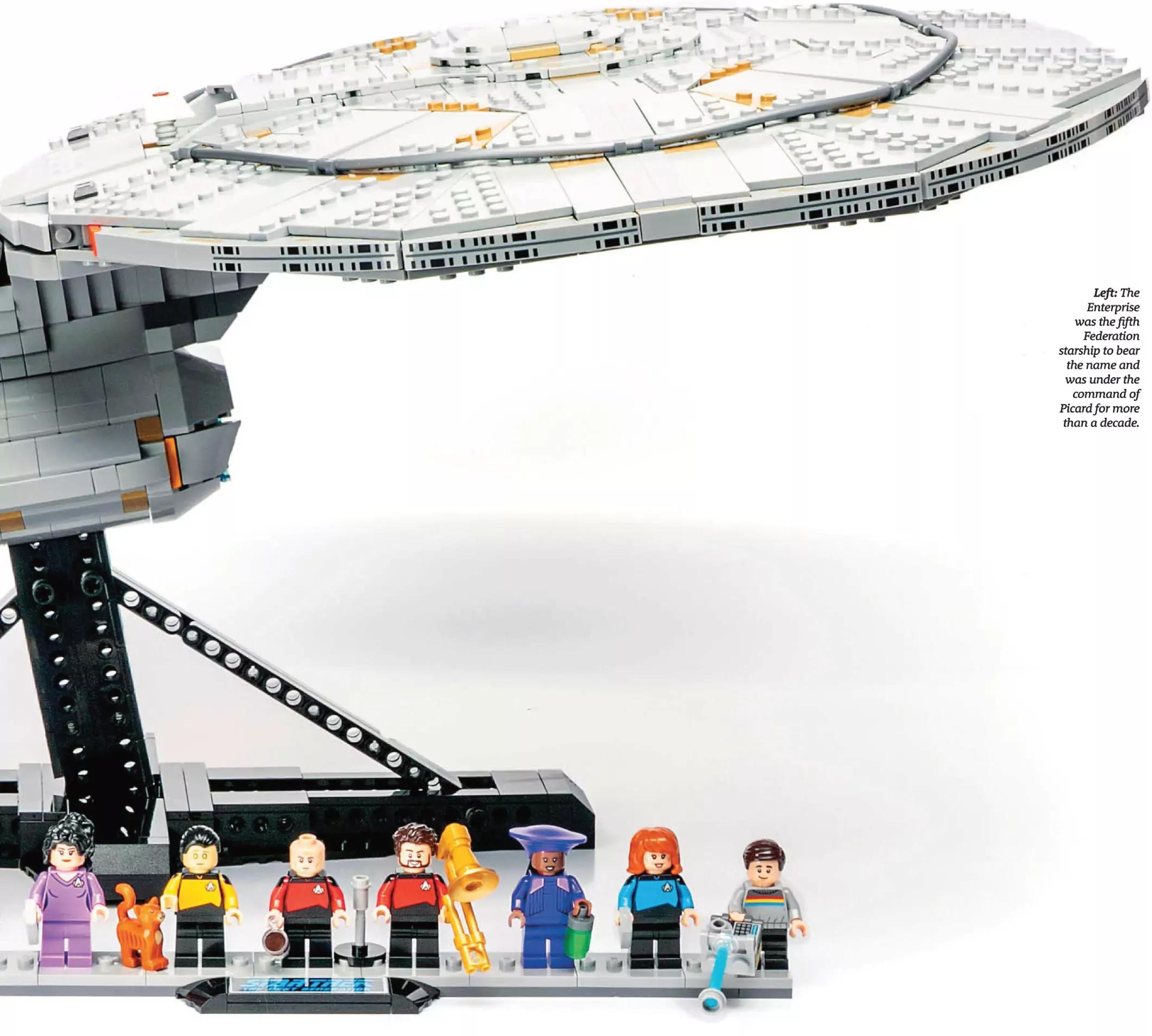
The much-anticipated debut of the LEGO Star Trek universe takes the iconic form of the Enterprise-D and is hopefully the first of other sets to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the franchise. There is no better way to celebrate the show and mark the LEGO Group's official voyage into the Star Trek universe than with a huge, 3,600-piece rendition of this famous flagship.

This is a starship built for a collector's shelf, aimed squarely at the adult audience who grew up following the adventures of Captain Picard and his crew. Those collectors will need a vast expanse of space – the completed model is a monster, measuring in at a shelf-busting 60cm x 50cm x 30cm in size. This isn't just a large model; it is a structural statement, a nostalgic triumph – and perhaps the most significant set of the year for sci-fi fans.

The completed model commands a formidable, almost daunting, presence. The LEGO design team has managed to capture the sleek yet complex design of the Galaxy-class starship, which features curves and shapes that are notoriously difficult to translate into bricks. The ship's distinctive profile, with its broad, graceful saucer and long, narrow secondary hull, presents a nightmare of weight distribution and connection points. It's a testament to the team that this engineering marvel, whilst being considerably heavier than it looks, balances on its sturdy display stand without fear of collapse.

The initial build phases are a lesson in structural engineering and the power of the clutch. Unlike many large-scale builds, the Enterprise doesn't rely on a complex Technic skeleton but instead uses a side-built design using stacked System elements. Where connections between various parts of the ship come together, small Technic axles and ball joints are used to hold them in place, but the lack of a heavy Technic presence is refreshing.

You construct the secondary hull in two large, mirrored sections and the warp nacelles separately. These are incredibly strong and make great use of stacked curved plates and a vast array of SNOT elements. This design manages to avoid any flexing or warping (no pun intended) of the elements without the need for lots of Technic components.



***Left:** The Enterprise was the fifth Federation starship to bear the name and was under the command of Picard for more than a decade.*

Right: *With a crew of more than 1,000, the Enterprise-D is is a small village that travels at warp speed.*

Far right: *The model separates into two.*

Below, left to right: *After being critically damaged by a Klingon attack, the Enterprise-D is destroyed when Deanna Troi crashes it into Veridian III.*

The separated section really does look like a flying saucer.

The model used in the show for the saucer separation shots was about the same size as this LEGO set.

This is a style that the set relies on throughout. A good example is how multiple layered arch elements are used to form the 'neck' of the Enterprise. They create an impressively solid and weight-bearing section that resembles the on-screen model convincingly, although is a little more jagged-looking than the super-smooth source material. This is a rewarding and smart build that demands patience and precision to ensure that each sub-assembly is correctly aligned so that they can click perfectly into place and ensure the structure is rigid.

Clever use of exposed studs and ingot elements creates subtle texturing across the hull plating, to provide a sense of scale. Dark tan elements mimic the on-screen model and provide variety among the sea of grey elements.

The detailed engines also demonstrate good use of colour. The long, elegant nacelles feature transparent blue elements for the warp field grilles and new transparent red parts for the Bussard collectors. These are critical details that, under display lighting, provide the necessary contrast and ensure the final ship looks suitably dynamic and screen accurate. New printed canopy elements are used to reasonably good effect to form the main deflector dish.

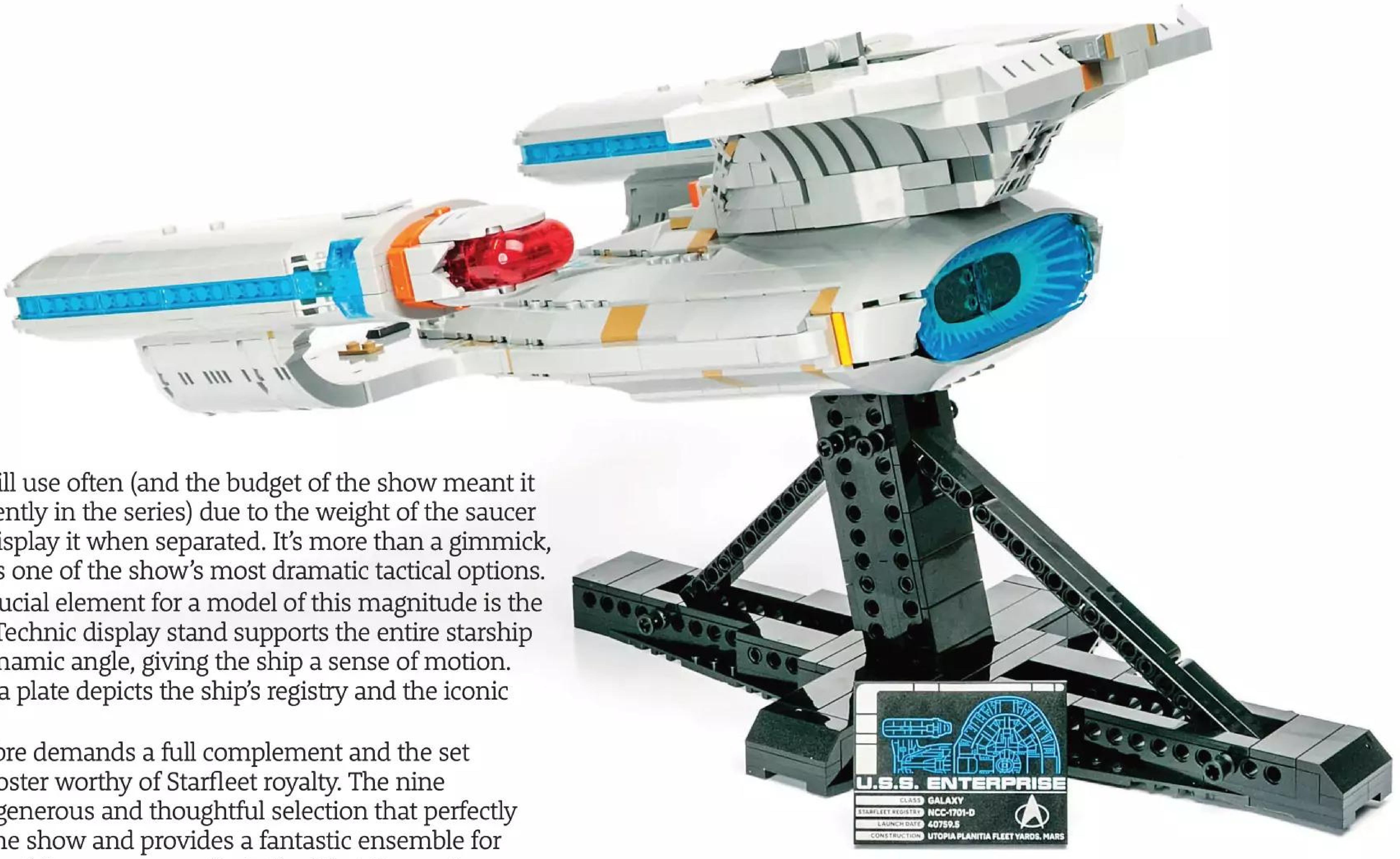
The primary hull (or saucer section) is a feat of geometry, using angled plates and curved slopes to create the perfect dish shape. A network of long arms forms from stacked plates and more SNOT bricks protrude out from a central hub. From there, clip and bar connections spread outwards on the upper and lower edges to hold dozens of angled sub-assemblies in place to create the dome of the saucer.

It's a clever approach, a great example of the geometries that the LEGO System can support at this scale. although a little repetitive to build. The lack of any interior detail is slightly disappointing. While the scale and the internal design makes it hard to imagine how the designers could have implemented an interior, the Enterprise does feel a little underrepresented in that area.

Viewed from above, the saucer shape is a pleasingly neat oval, thanks in part to the curved wedge elements that circle it. The design team has created new elements that feature printed windows, which are reasonably convincing, to help form the shape. These represent the majority of the few printed elements, which is unfortunate. The name plate bearing the famous registry, which is visible on the upper saucer below the bridge, is a printed element. Beyond that, almost all other details are stickered. The ship's plaque is another sticker, which is a mixed blessing because it is eventually enclosed inside the saucer section so isn't visible anyway. An odd choice... almost illogical.

While the sheer size and the overall accuracy are impressive, a true Star Trek: The Next Generation model needs a defining feature – and the USS Enterprise-D delivers a critical function: saucer separation. This ability to detach the primary hull from the star drive section is integrated seamlessly into the core build.

The separation mechanism itself is simple, yet robust, relying on a single Technic axle (cleverly disguised as a shuttle) that holds the two massive sections firmly together. When separated, the mechanism leaves both halves looking clean and finished. This feature isn't


U.S.S. ENTERPRISE
CLASS GALAXY
STARFLEET REGISTRY NCC-1701-D
LAUNCH DATE 40759.5
CONSTRUCTION UTOPIA PLANITIA FLEET YARDS, MARS

something that you will use often (and the budget of the show meant it was also used infrequently in the series) due to the weight of the saucer and lack of ability to display it when separated. It's more than a gimmick, however, and recreates one of the show's most dramatic tactical options.

Perhaps the most crucial element for a model of this magnitude is the stand. A sturdy, black Technic display stand supports the entire starship securely at a slight, dynamic angle, giving the ship a sense of motion. To complete the base, a plate depicts the ship's registry and the iconic Starfleet insignia.

A model of this calibre demands a full complement and the set delivers a minifigure roster worthy of Starfleet royalty. The nine minifigures present a generous and thoughtful selection that perfectly captures the heart of the show and provides a fantastic ensemble for display. Every member of the crew wears their The Next Generation uniform, complete with highly detailed decoration including arm printing.

Picard has his trademark cup of Earl Grey tea. Riker has his beloved trombone. Commander Data and Spot are instantly recognisable. The head print for Data is impressively accurate. Geordi La Forge and his VISOR are also spot on. Guinan and Wesley are both included, which speaks to the completeness of the set, however you might feel about them as characters.

If there is a standout then it's Worf, with a fantastic new wig element that brilliantly captures his unique look. This roster is the ultimate collector's selection and instantly makes this set a must-buy for fans. Many would have settled for the core bridge crew, but the inclusion of some of the less obvious characters elevates the selection.

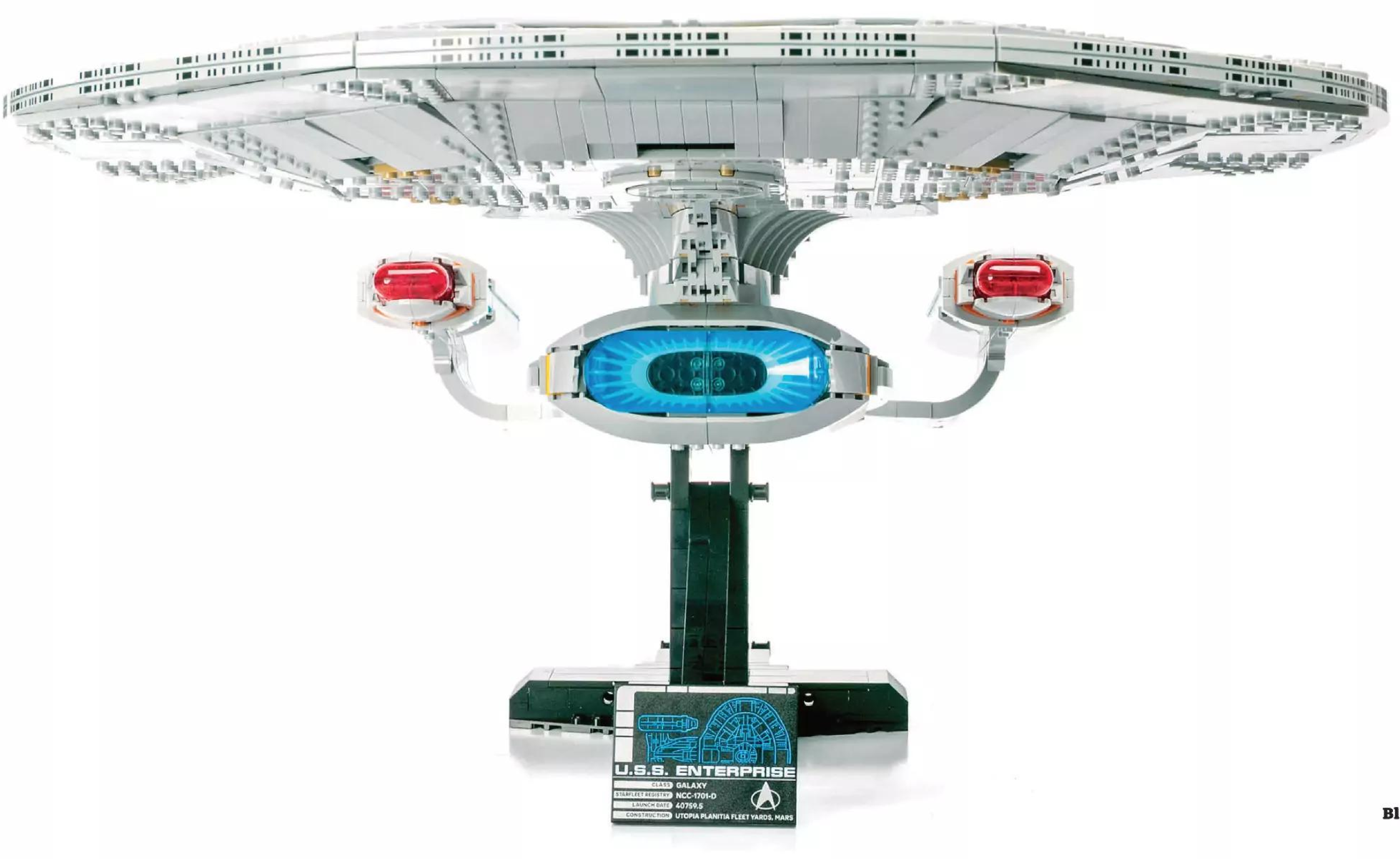
LEGO Icons 10356 Star Trek Enterprise is a significant debut set. It succeeds on pretty much every front; as an engaging, complex build, as an eye-catching display piece and as an homage to one of the most beloved ships in science fiction history.

There are, of course, some drawbacks, namely the somewhat jagged areas of the ship and the exposed studs on the saucer that don't effectively substitute for windows. The lack of a new phaser accessory is disappointing. There is no attempt at a bridge or interior, which makes it feel less interactive. The sheer size of the model means you will need to carefully allocate shelf space. Furthermore, the reliance on stickers for some details will draw the usual complaints.

But these concerns are easily mitigated when faced with the overall quality of the final product. For Star Trek fans who have waited patiently for the Enterprise to arrive in official LEGO form, the long wait has been worth it.

DAVE CARTLIDGE

Verdict
85
This excellent LEGO model captures the Enterprise-D beautifully and includes a great roster of Star Trek: The Next Generation characters. A bit of interior would elevate it.


U.S.S. ENTERPRISE
CLASS GALAXY
STARFLEET REGISTRY NCC-1701-D
LAUNCH DATE 40759.5
CONSTRUCTION UTOPIA PLANITIA FLEET YARDS, MARS

77057

Theme: *Animal Crossing* / ***Price:*** *£79.99, $89.99, €89.99* /
Recommended age: *7+* / ***Pieces:*** *814* / ***Minifigures:*** *3*

Creative Houses: Seasons of Fun

When it comes to making the island a bustling community, Tom Nook delegates absolutely everything. In fact, except for taking mysterious phone calls, it's not really obvious how he contributes to any Animal Crossing island. All of the building and decorating has to be done by the player in order to encourage new residents to arrive.

77057 Creative Houses: Seasons of Fun celebrates home renovations and interior decorating throughout the seasons. One really nice reference early in the building process is the bridge. Although it might appear a bit random, it's a reference to how players can't start building new homes until there's a way to cross the river.

It doesn't take long to get into the titular seasonal elements. Each one follows the same basic build process. There's a cherry blossom for spring, pears for summer, pumpkins for autumn and a jolly snowman for winter. It's the first time an Animal Crossing set has included every season. The different options add to the customisability of this set.

There are also different choices to make when constructing the houses, with different decorations and the option to stack them for a second floor. The dark yellow and green contrast nicely for Stitches' home, but it's the interior which is the real star. Stitches has the play hobby in New Horizons, so his decor is exactly that – playful. All of the furniture uses bold primary colours and the alphabet art is an actual poster Stitches has in the game.

Unsurprisingly, Fuchsia's home is extremely pink. Although this suits her character, who brands everything around her name, it does make this house quite similar to 77050 Nook's Cranny & Rosie's House. Using different window elements or more shades of purple would have helped to differentiate them better. The interior has a modern apartment aesthetic with partition walls and minimalist furniture. There are some retro touches too, including the fun jukebox.

Fang also arrives on the island, with nordic furniture in tow. The character and accessories add some more storytelling to the set. Each minifigure looks exactly how they appear in the game, including the slightly creepy Stitches with cross-stitch eyes.

This is a great set for fans looking to expand an Animal Crossing village display and it will look perfect with any of the previous homes. The seasonal options allow you to change it throughout the year, which is a really nice touch.

KAT REES-JAUKE

Verdict 62 **With fun customisation and details, this set is perfect for playing out DIY adventures. The elements for different seasons make it a great year-round display.**

Above: *Animal Crossing is the only place where you are guaranteed friendly neighbours.*

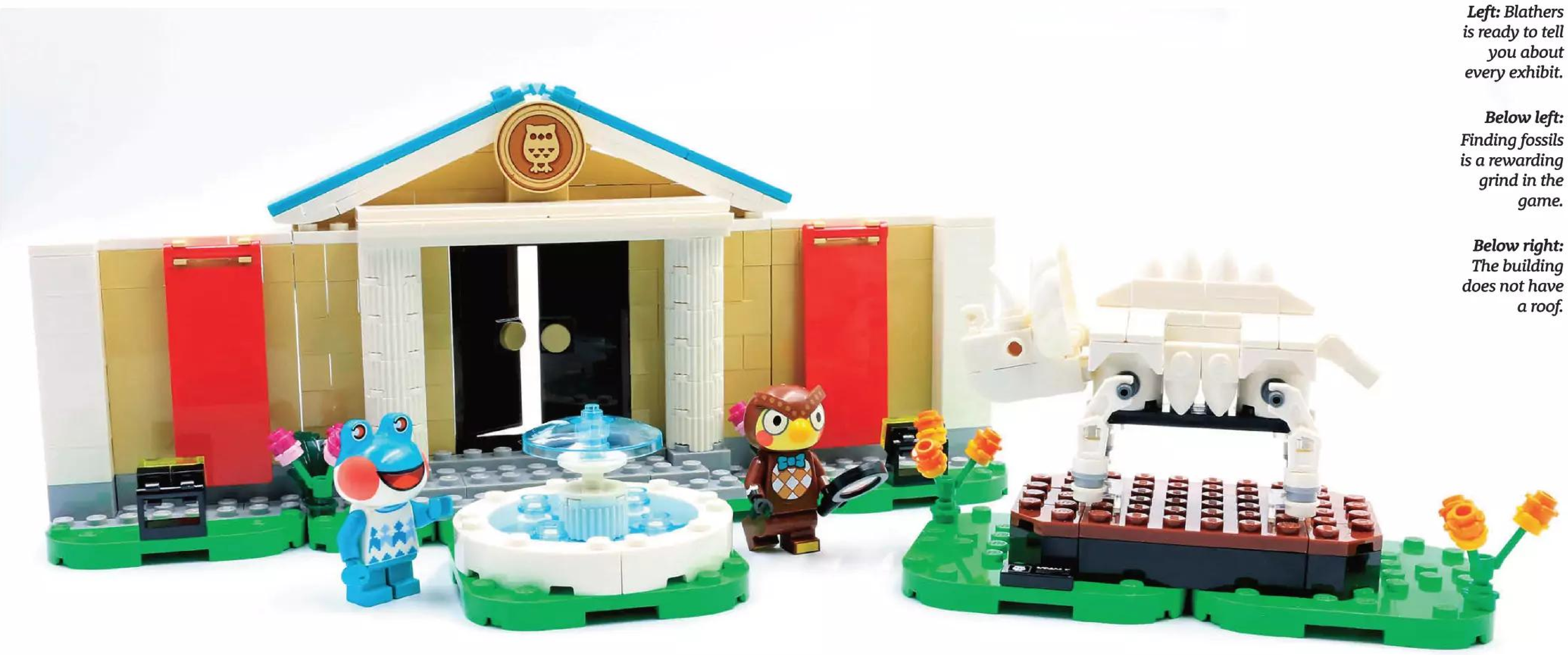
Left: *Fuchsia embraces pink.*

Right: *Stitches likes to have fun with furniture.*

77056

Theme: *Animal Crossing* / ***Price:*** *£74.99, $79.99, €79.99* /
Recommended age: *7+* / ***Pieces:*** *543* / ***Minifigures:*** *2*

Blathers's Museum Collection



Left: *Blathers is ready to tell you about every exhibit.*

Below left: *Finding fossils is a rewarding grind in the game.*

Below right: *The building does not have a roof.*

One of the most challenging quests in Animal Crossing: New Horizons is finding every exhibit for the museum. It requires bug hunting in the middle of the night, fishing during every season and not being duped by art forgers. From fossils and butterflies to spiders and sea bass, altogether there are more than 300 displays to find. While 77056 Blathers's Museum Collection captures the game mechanic, it does not recreate the graphics.

All of the exhibits are based on the different collections – fossils, sea creatures, insects, art, and fish. Each one has a 1x2 info plaque with a little Blathers logo printed on it.

The largest category to collect is fossils, with 73 to find, so it makes sense that the triceratops is the most eye-catching display. Although it's relatively small, it looks extremely effective. Cheese slopes suggest the rib cage and hinges double as the legs. The use of a LEGO clam shell element for the head frill is absolutely ingenious.

There are also references to the different upgrades that players unlock for the museum, including The Roost, which is the little coffee pot in the corner, as well as the art pieces on the walls. It definitely captures the essence of the museum in the game, especially as the hinges allow the finished model to open out, which is similar to the way you can access different floors virtually.

The museum looks great when it's open and the exhibits are on display. But closing the hinged walls, whether for display or storage, reveals a glaring issue. There is no roof for the building. While a roof doesn't really work when it is in the open configuration, there is no reason for there not to be a removable roof that can be placed on top of the closed structure.

Instead, extra pieces have been used in the little adjoining landscape. This has been included so Lily can capture bugs or dig up fossils to give to Blathers. While it's a nice play option, almost every LEGO Animal Crossing set has this type of scene. It is completely unnecessary in this set and those pieces would have been better used for the actual museum. A missing roof is a glaring omission. It's a shame as it definitely detracts from the display value.

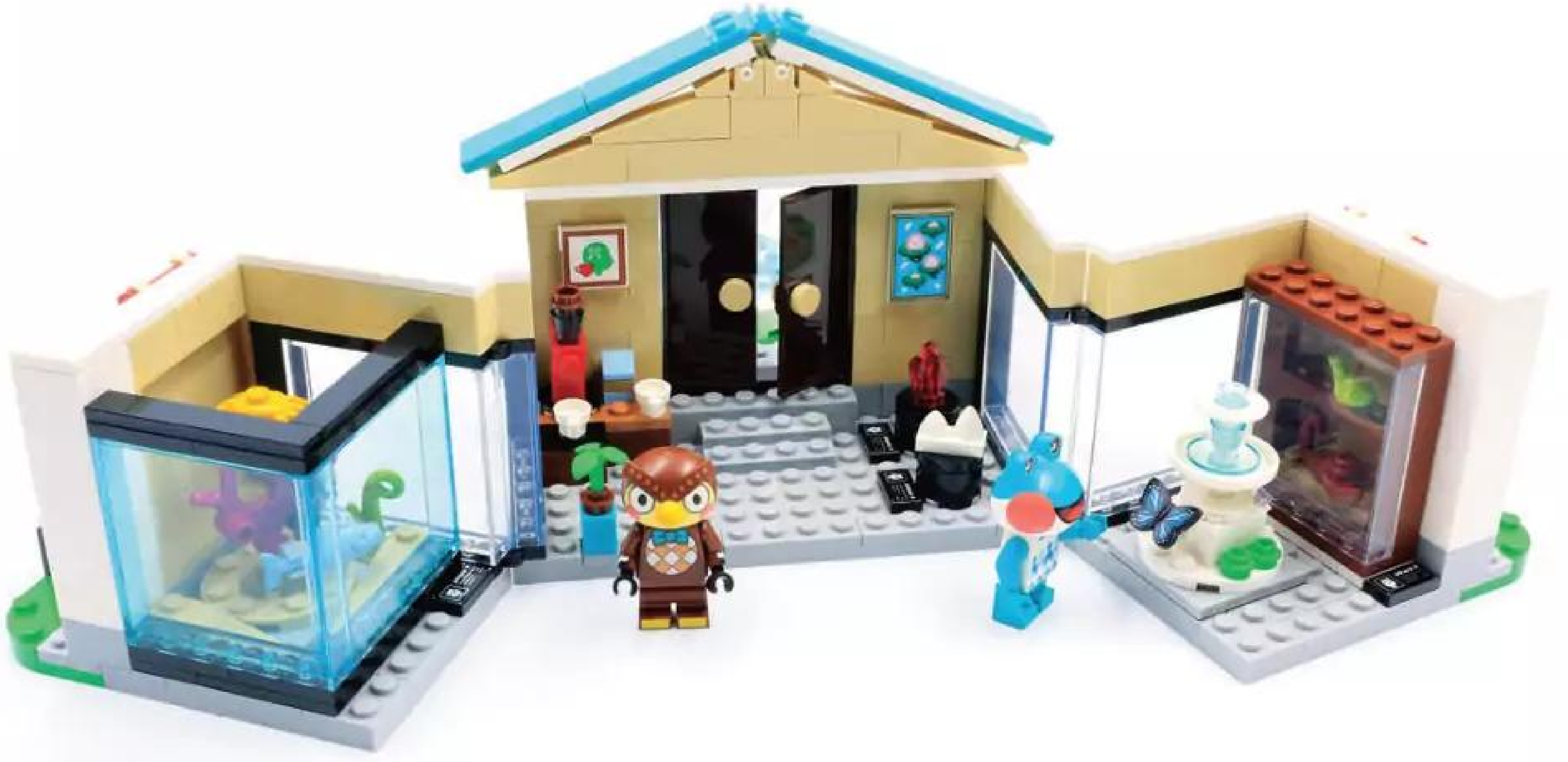
Thankfully the minifigures are strong. Lily and Blathers are both are exclusive to 77056. Blathers is absolutely perfect – his new moulded head is printed with his wide-eyed expression, mimicking how players often wake him from a nap to assess fossils. Lily has appeared in every Animal Crossing game and happily wanders around in a coat whenever it's raining. She also uses a new mould for her froggy physique and it looks exactly like her digital appearance.

77056 Blathers's Museum Collection has a lot of storytelling for younger fans, but the unpolished nature of the building is frustrating, as using more pieces on the museum could have really enhanced this model.

KAT REES-JAUKE

Verdict
63

There are plenty of great exhibits for Blathers to hoot about, but all of the pieces should have gone into the museum. Not every set needs a landscape.



21360

Theme: Ideas / **Price:** £199.99, $219.99, €219.99 /
Recommended age: 18+ / **Pieces:** 2,025 / **Minifigures:** 9

Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory

LEGO fans have won a golden ticket now that the beloved movie adaptation of the Roald Dahl classic has made it to the brick

Given the cultural impact that Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory has had, it's quite incredible that Ideas users needed to tell the LEGO Group that this would be popular subject matter for a set. Roberto Ceruti and Jody Padulano proved just that though, as they submitted their concept to the platform and it reached 10,000 votes.

Since then, the LEGO design team worked on the set and turned it into the finished model that is 21360 Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory. The 1971 film has delighted audiences ever since its release, as each new generation is introduced to it by their parents. It's surprisingly quirky considering it is a family movie made on a decent budget, as it blends together musical numbers, humour and dark imagery, while ensuring that Gene Wilder's Willy Wonka remains unknowable throughout.

The most memorable set piece is the incredible room that contains an idyllic land where everything is edible. Willy Wonka presents the location to the five golden ticket holders he has invited to his factory and tells them that everything is edible — and invites them to eat any of it, aside from the chocolate river, which must remain untouched.

It's that beloved sequence that the LEGO set is inspired by. You start with the base layer, putting together the chocolate river and building up the dry land either side where you will add the many edible delights. None of it is very intricate or surprising at this point, but it is certainly enjoyable to see the bottom level form.

The focus then moves to the mountain. This is cleverly crafted in sections that you connect to the main model, which include several strategically placed Technic bricks with holes. You then slot gears into these so that later the chocolate waterfall will be able to move.

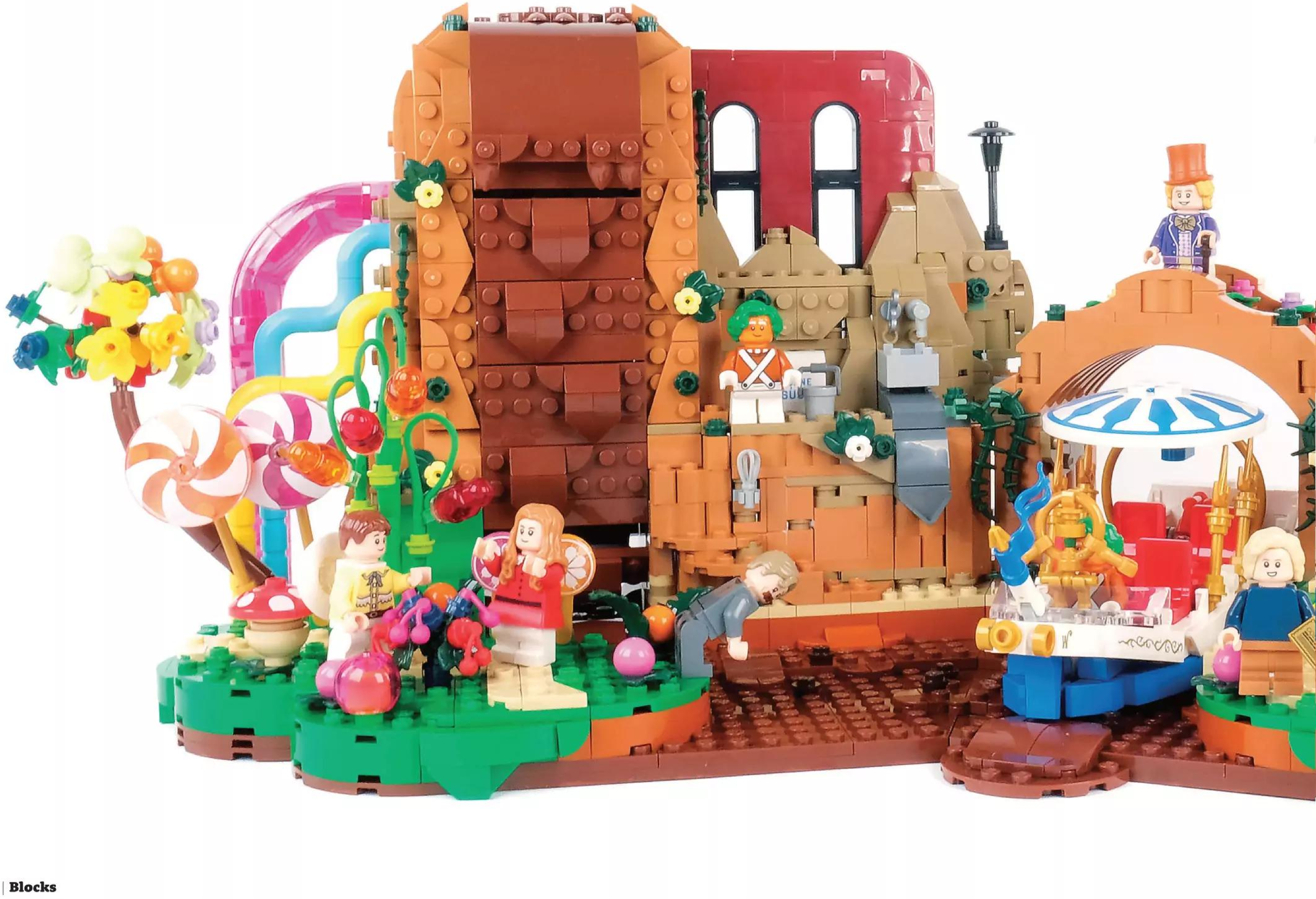
As you build up the rockwork, there is an interior space to put together. It turns out to be Willy Wonka's office, from the end of the film, with a few items from other scenes (such as lickable wallpaper and the incredibly detailed contract) thrown in for good measure. It's a decent enough space, but there is little else hidden away aside from a small storage area above it.

The room-facing side of the mountain is fun to build, especially as you realise you are adding steps and equipment for the Oompa Loompas. Two are included in the set and they both represent their on-screen look really well.

You construct a section of factory wall at the back of the waterfall, which is a nice way of indicating that this incredible, fantastical landscape is actually inside a chocolate factory.

The waterfall itself is a little repetitive to build, but it easily connects to the gear elements and looks great when you crank the handle to make it move, with a larger piece at the top cleverly disguising the functionality.

It's then time to move down to the grassy area and start building the



candy treats that are seemingly growing all around the garden. These are intricate little models that convey the whimsical fun that you get while watching the characters run around the idyllic location.

Once the various candy plants are constructed, you add the bridge that connects the two sides of the chocolate river. It's simple, but nice to see how the entire space links together. There are then more sugary plants to clip together on that side of the model.

There is a nice interruption towards the end when the instruction book switches things up and has you build the Wonkatania, the boat that takes the characters on a chilling journey to their next destination. It's an absolutely expertly crafted vessel that does not waste a single stud of space – it's a little delicate as you're building it, but the efficiency of element use in it is truly impressive.

The shape of the set is really interesting and it's fantastic that the LEGO design team continues to craft the bases so that they are angled rather than keeping them square. It works especially well when a model depicts an organic environment, as this one does.

All of the areas filled with colourful candy foliage are successful too – but the set would be improved if they were larger relative to the chocolate river and waterfall. The set is dominated by shades of brown, because the majority of the model, including the most vertical parts of it, are built in those hues. That's the only criticism to be made of how it displays though, as it includes all of the key icons from the sequence.

The minifigures cover Charlie Bucket and the other four children, Grandpa Joe and Willy Wonka himself. They are all great, but the top-hatted chocolatier is the best of the bunch, largely thanks to the film's fabulous costume design. The purple coat runs down from his torso to his legs and his top hat and hair are combined in a single new piece.

21360 Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory is a successful way to present the classic movie as a LEGO set – it captures the memorable scene that everyone wishes they could step into.

GRAHAM E. HANCOCK

Verdict 76 **The sweetest scene from Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory is delivered in a set that provides generous scoops of both play and display.**

Far left: The set recreates the most iconic scene from Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory.

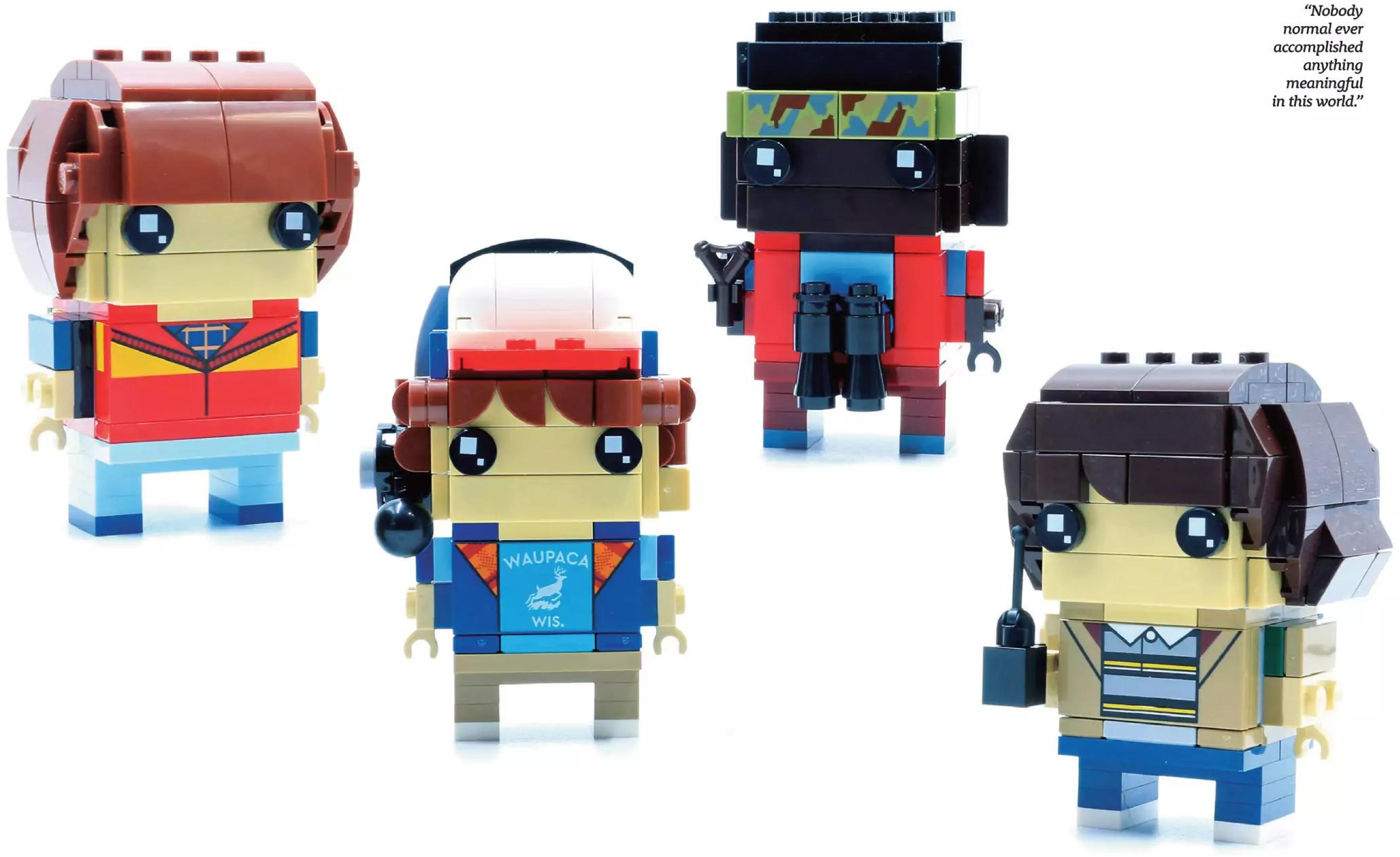
Above: There is a room built into the back to represent Willy Wonka's office.

Left: Willy Wonka features a new hat and hair element.

40801

Theme: *BrickHeadz* / ***Price:*** *£34.99, $39.99, €39.99* /
Recommended age: *10+* / ***Pieces:*** *542* / ***Minifigures:*** *0*

Mike, Dustin, Lucas & Will Figures



"Nobody normal ever accomplished anything meaningful in this world."

As mysterious disappearances and events grip the sleepy town of Hawkins, it's up to a courageous group of friends to uncover what's really going on, outrunning the paranormal threat and secretive government agencies. In 2016, Stranger Things was a genuine cultural phenomenon at a time of fragmented media consumption. Nine years later, it is coming to an epic conclusion. This BrickHeadz set returns to the very beginning as Mike, Dustin, Lucas and Will explore the Upside Down.

Each character's appearance is inspired by the heroic moment near the end of the season. Mike is the plainest of the four in his grey shirt and tan jacket, which matches the understated nature of his character. He has a little walkie talkie accessory, reiterating this simpler era of technology, and a backpack for extra batteries.

By comparison, Dustin is an explosion of colour. He has his Waupaca t-shirt which is brilliantly printed with the plaid lining of his coat. Rounded LEGO bread tiles and 1x1 plates then recreate his riotous curls, which blend naturally into his baseball cap. He wears his headset, as he does in the show when he goes to find Steve and his baseball bat.

Lucas is ready to delve into the creepy forest surrounding Hawkins, sporting his camouflage bandana and holding his slingshot at the ready. His outfit should be a bit more muted – using dark red for his jacket would have been more screen accurate.

The same issue applies to Will's outfit, which seems a little too bright compared to what he wears in the first season, though the designers have done an excellent job at recreating his bowl haircut with curved tiles. It really looks like Joyce has cut his hair herself and it's a masterclass in achieving realistic rounded curves.

All of these BrickHeadz models are brilliant builds and you can almost hear the theme music as you build through the set. Together they are all immediately recognisable – though the gaps are also prominent. There's no Eleven or Nancy. Where's Steve with his bat? Where's Hopper? Okay, stretching the set to eight characters might be a bit much, but it should have at least been a five pack and included Eleven so the Season 1 core gang are all present.

As a standalone set it feels rather random and hopefully there will be another box to complement it. Perhaps the Season 1 label on the box art is an indication of more to come…

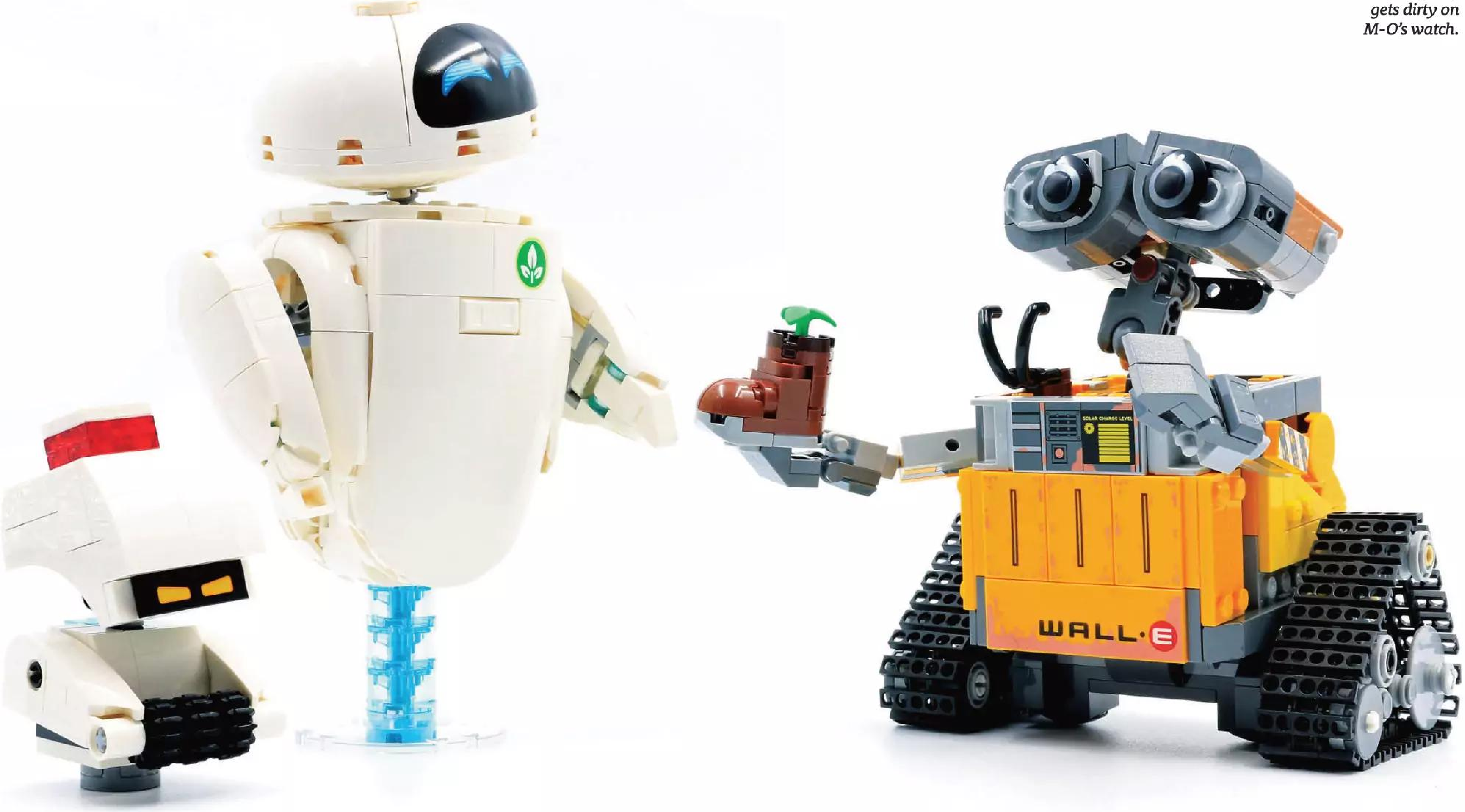
KAT REES-JAUKE

Verdict
66
This is a great rendition of these friends as they uncover the mysteries of Hawkins, but the set really would be improved if it also included Eleven.

43279

Theme: Disney / **Price:** £59.99, $69.99, €69.99 /
Recommended age: 18+ / **Pieces:** 811 / **Minifigures:** 0

WALL-E & EVE



Left: *Who knew an old boot could save the world?*

Below: *Nothing gets dirty on M-O's watch.*

With his charming love of musicals and passion for collecting vintage trinkets and seemingly random junk, WALL-E steals the hearts of audiences as he goes on a journey to rescue a plant and unexpectedly saves the entirety of planet Earth at the same time. He's not alone on this journey as he slowly falls in love with EVE and meets the overworked M-O.

This latest version of the beloved robot is slightly smaller in scale than 21303 WALL-E from 2015, though the character appears far more accurate through printed tiles and the numerous curved elements that have arrived over the past ten years. He's also far more expressive – his arms can move on long Technic pins and a ball joint allows his head to tilt just like in the film.

Another advantage of this smaller scale is that WALL-E now has an actual cube of trash that he can 'crush'. It allows fans to recreate the scene where WALL-E shows off his abilities to the far more advanced EVE.

She is perfectly proportioned relative to the trash collector and makes great use of shell elements to capture her curved shape. You build an internal column of exposed studs for EVE, then place round tiles and shell elements to create seamless smooth lines. Her arms can tuck neatly into her body or be posed to hold WALL-E's clawed hand.

M-O finished up the trio. He follows WALL-E across almost the entirety of the Axiom, cleaning up dirty tread marks, and his dedication to scrubbing is admirable. White curved arches capture the unusual angles of his head and his slightly perturbed expression suits his frustration at having to constantly clean up. While he looks absolutely perfect, he does overbalance very easily, which limits the poses M-O can stand in.

That's a tiny complaint for a set that's mainly a galactic success. This is the best rendition of these robots yet, learning from the different scales and techniques of its predecessors to truly bring each character to life. 43279 WALL-E & EVE is a must-buy for fans of this movie who want to blast into outer space to dance in the stars with these robots.

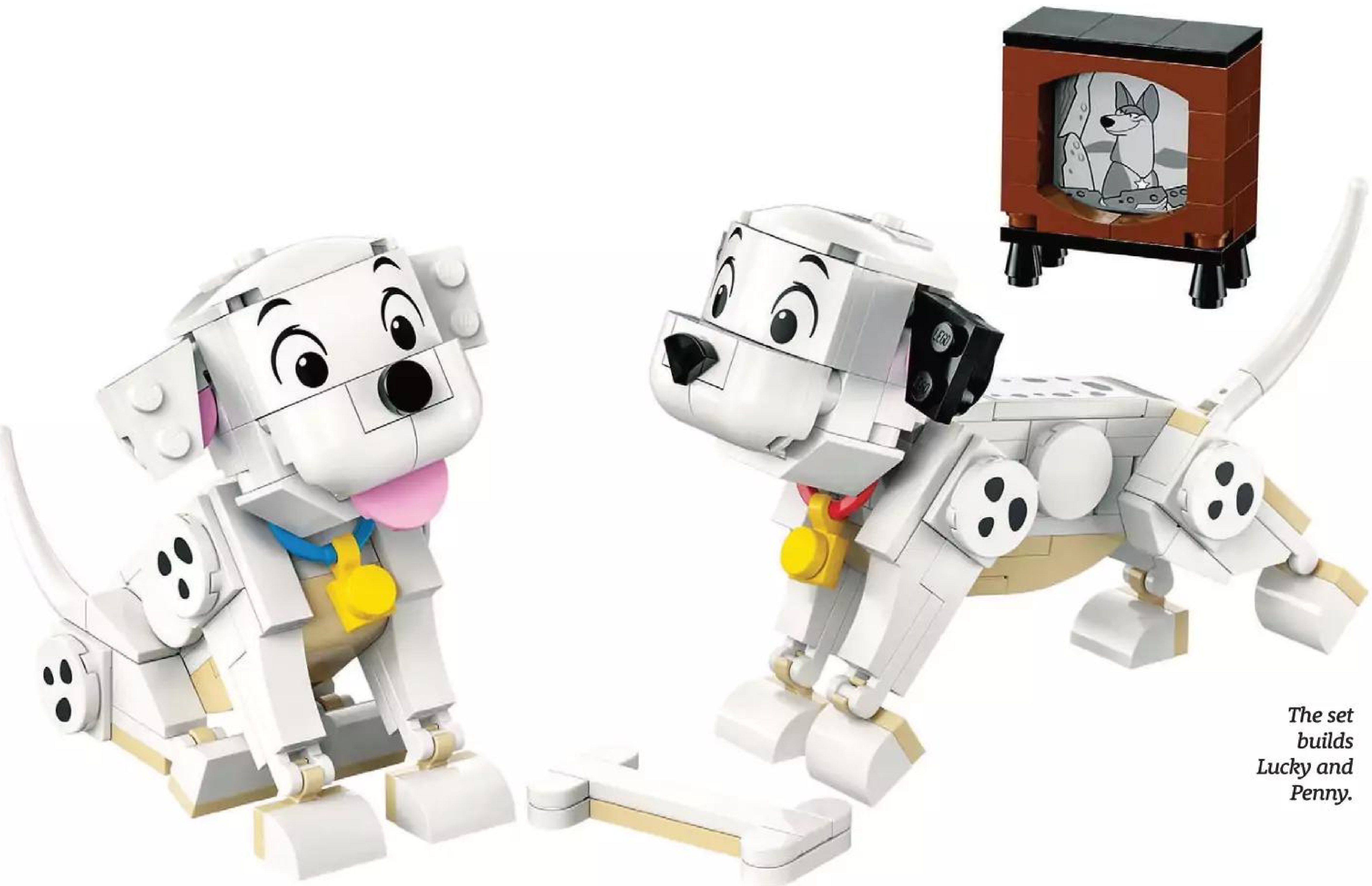
KAT REES-JAUKE

Verdict
80
43279 WALL-E & EVE beautifully imbues the iconic robots with personality, although at this scale they do lean heavily on decoration for key details.

43271

Theme: Disney / **Price:** £19.99, $24.99, €24.99 /
Recommended age: 6+ / **Pieces:** 268 / **Minifigures:** 0

Lucky & Penny 101 Dalmatians Puppies



The set builds Lucky and Penny.

Great as it is that LEGO Disney has given 101 Dalmatians some love this year, it's frustrating that the three sets are all in different scales, which limits your options when it comes to either playing with them or displaying them as a trio.

It's hard to be grumpy about a set as fun as 43271 Lucky & Penny 101 Dalmatians Puppies though when the price is so low. It is a speedy build that results in two dogs, both built in the exact same way, a television set showing Thunderbolt the wonder dog and a bone.

The TV is the most disappointing aspect as it's too small for these pooches but too large for minifigure scale, making it a strange accessory. The bone is simple but fun and relevant.

Lucky and Penny's faces are very successful, capturing a suitably dog-like shape and using a printed element that depicts their eyes. Penny's tongue is hanging out, which looks very cute.

Their bodies are a bit square along the sides, but are curved at the bottom to disguise the boxiness. The legs work okay, but would be improved if they were attached with Mixels joints to give the dalmatians more posability.

If you have the budget, then 43269 101 Dalmatians Puppy is the set to get. If you want something smaller and more affordable, then know that this is not the perfect set and does not contain perfectly sculpted pooches – but for the price, it's hard to complain as this set results in two charming dogs.

GRAHAM E. HANCOCK

Verdict 58 **Start your dalmatian collection with this pair and you only have another 99 to track down. Decent dogs considering the low piece count.**

71494

Theme: DREAMZzz / **Price:** £24.99, $29.99, €29.99 /
Recommended age: 8+ / **Pieces:** 359 / **Minifigures:** 1

Zoey's Time Owl

Since DREAMZzz launched, Zoey's models have revolved around cute animals, as is the case with 71494 Zoey's Time Owl, a majestic addition to Zoey's menagerie.

There are two options that build upon a base torso, legs and head, the last of which offers a neat build experience. The A model is the full Time Owl – the wings are extended and use gold, pink and blue plates to add some nice details, whilst a clock, which uses a transparent radar piece printed with a clock face, is on the owl's chest. When fully built, the Time Owl is superb, with a large wing-span and solid articulation.

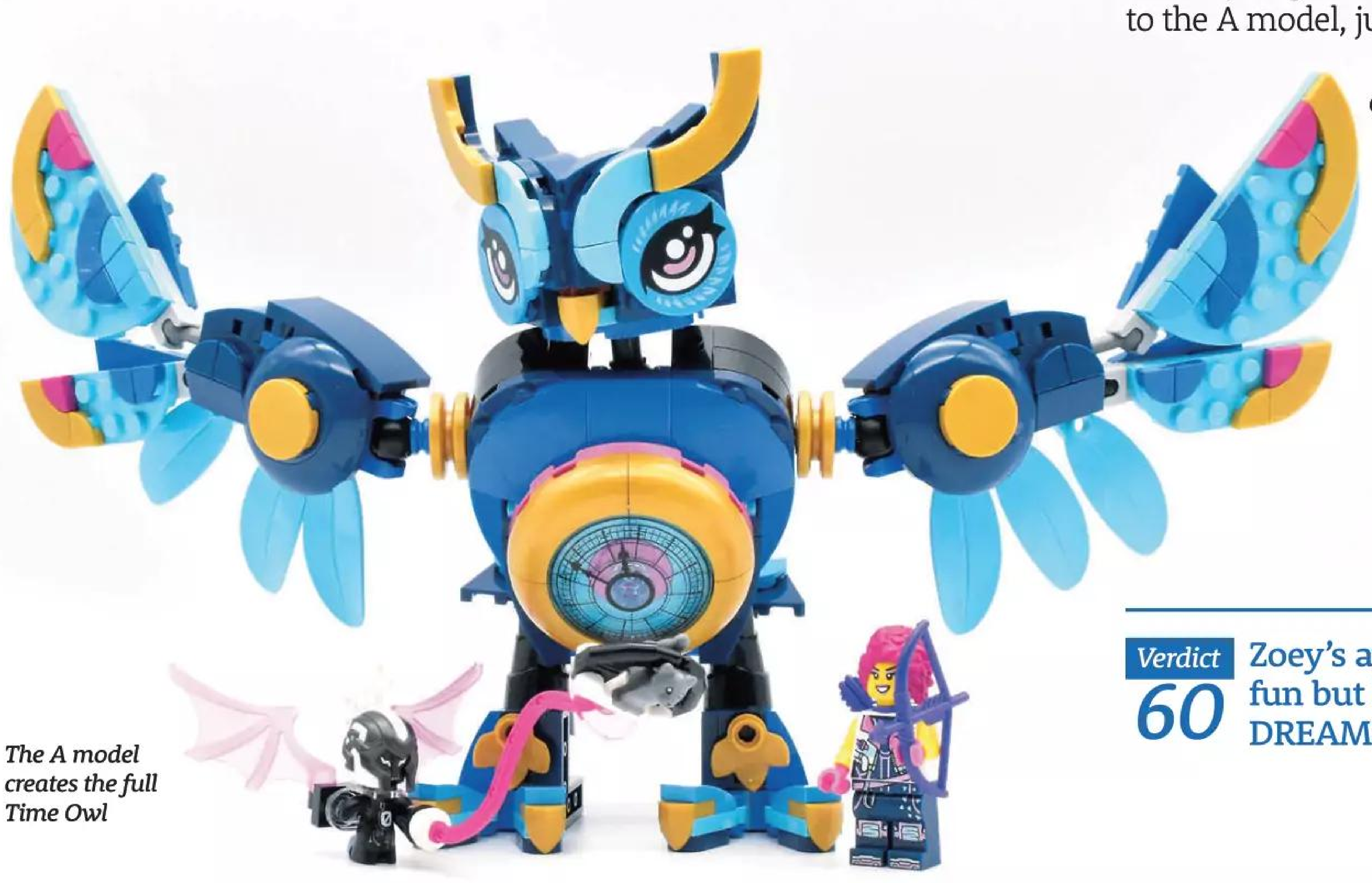
The B build is the owl boat, a somewhat goofy idea that sets the head at a ninety degree angle and puts the clock at the back. The wings are similar to the A model, just angled in a way to look like the sides of a boat.

Both models benefit from the Time Owl's attractive colour scheme – various shades of blue bricks (regular, dark azure and medium azure) provide texture and depth, while the gold adds elegance.

The minifigure selection provides enough opportunity for play – the Cyberling has captured Zoey's cat and the Time Owl is on hand to help get them back. However, as with many smaller DREAMZzz sets, the enemy build is insubstantial against such an impressive opponent. Perhaps the Cyberling should have thought twice before stealing the well-connected feline.

ANTHONY WALKER-COOK

Verdict 60 **Zoey's avian ally looks good, with pretty colours and a fun but limited build. It's definitely worth adding to your DREAMZzz collection.**

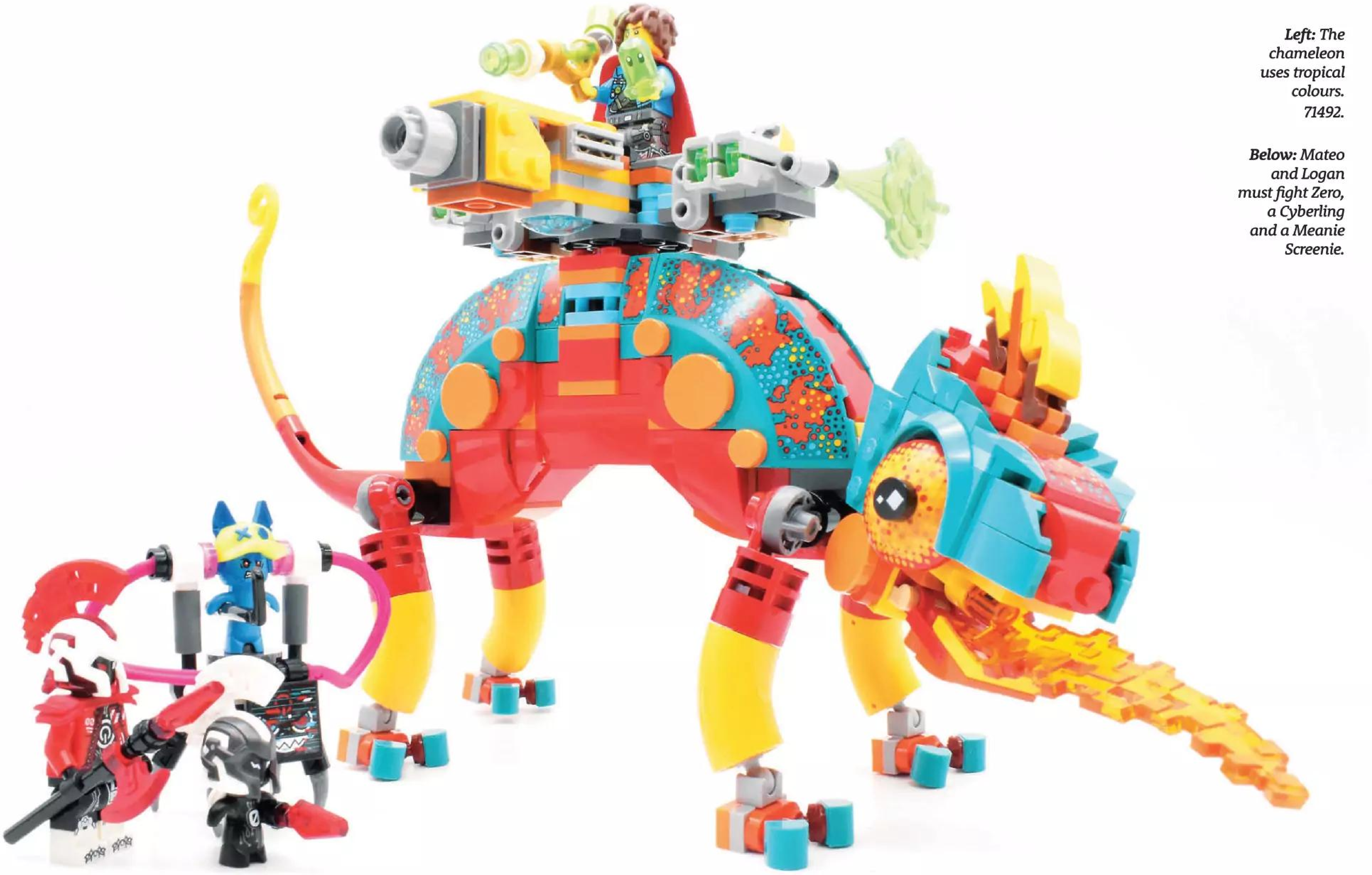


The A model creates the full Time Owl

71492

Theme: *DREAMZzz /* ***Price:*** *£44.99, $54.99, €49.99 /*
Recommended age: *7+ /* ***Pieces:*** *443 /* ***Minifigures:*** *2*

Mateo's Fire Chameleon



Left: *The chameleon uses tropical colours. 71492.*

Below: *Mateo and Logan must fight Zero, a Cyberling and a Meanie Screenie.*

With some imagination, any creature can become a noble steed ready to fight against evil. A large fire-breathing chameleon is a perfect example of that creative potential and this DREAMZzz model capitalises on the concept with brio.

The shaping typical of chameleons is superbly recreated. The build starts with a 2x16 plate and uses brackets to create the arched shaping underneath whilst red slopes attached by clips create a curved spine.

The chameleon's head is also exquisite, with a striking use of cheese slopes, wedges and mudguards to create a variety of textures reminiscent of scales. Dish pieces with a new pixelated print sit in the eye socket on a ball joint.

The head is connected to the body by a large ball joint, which provides enough rigidity to pose as desired. Because of its size, the head hangs low, creating a natural looking posture.

More broadly, the chameleon's colour scheme is suitably tropical, with red, yellow and dark turquoise meshing nicely alongside some orange spots. The few stickers included have a pixelated design, but this effectively doubles for scales.

Thankfully, the 2-in-1 optionality doesn't affect the chameleon but instead focuses on what Mateo and Z-Blob will use to fight Zero and the Cyberling, who have kidnapped Logan.

The dream crafting options of this model are less involved than others in the DREAMZzz range, but it's a fair design decision given the strength of the chameleon build. If anything, it is better this way, as both options are enjoyable and work well.

The A build is a blaster turret that sits on top of the chameleon, but it can also detach and fly off as a nifty fighter. It's a solid model that's small but swooshable, with trans-bright green elements giving the impression of soaring towards the enemy.

Alternatively, the B model offers a smaller jet and a cute mech for Z-Blob. The mech's arms are fixed using clips, but the legs can move. Whilst the turret option is the stronger of the two, this B-model is hardly a poor alternative, especially as the mech gives Z-Blob something to do.

A threatening Meanie Screenie is included and has a distinctly uncanny feel thanks to the scuttling legs. As for minifigures, Logan is exclusive and this is the cheapest way to get the superb Zero figure.

71492 Mateo's Fire Chameleon has almost everything you need for an exciting play session.

ANTHONY WALKER-COOK

Verdict
73
71492 Mateo's Fire Chameleon stands out among the DREAMZzz animals for the accurate shaping, enticing colours and engaging build techniques.

71499

Theme: *DREAMZzz* / ***Price:*** *£89.99, $99.99, €99.99* /
Recommended age: *9+* / ***Pieces:*** *929* / ***Minifigures:*** *5*

Mateo's Spray Paint Truck

Are the Dream Chasers about to paint the town green in this new vehicle?

71499 Mateo's Spray Paint Truck is a sizable model for Dream Chasers to ride in to fight against their enemies. Given that this year they are battling a nefarious AI that is using the Happy App to cause screen addiction in the waking world, a massive can of paint seems the perfect tool for the job.

The build starts with the truck itself, which is made up of a striking but effective colour palette of lime green, neon yellow and red. Metallic stickers add an edgy touch. The cab is bulky and formidable, with a large radiator grill and silver air scoop, whilst a pair of cow catchers at the front, large trans-bright green tyres and the vehicle's slight forward rake all give the vehicle something of a colourful, child-friendly Mad Max vibe. Despite how improbable that sounds, it works.

The central build continues with the trailer, which attaches onto the truck using a ball joint and tow ball socket, giving the two together some dynamic movement, although there is no steering mechanism for the truck itself. The trailer can also be displayed alone by deploying a support at the front. Red and neon yellow plates give some shaping and detail, then stickers of Z-Blob and a fire warning add character.

Interior space is somewhat lacking in both units – the truck has a cab with some controls and the trailer has a shallow, empty compartment. Perhaps it's for all of the Dream Chasers' weapons, but given what goes on top of the trailer, this is an acceptable compromise.

Up top, Technic rotation joints set the stage for the A and B models. The A model is the titular spray paint truck. Large lime curved panels create most of the shape, with stickers cautioning that things are about to get messy.

A stud shooter acts as the nozzle, activated by a knob on the side of the can, which turns an internal gear system. A small cockpit sits on top of the can. The spray can move vertically but not horizontally, but it is held firmly in place by the Technic joints. You also add some stud-shooting turrets to the side of the trailer and the complete look is undeniably impressive.

The alternative B model offers a spray can rocket and launcher, which is not a big change from the A model. You still use the stud shooter, although it loses the knob activation. It's actually the cockpit that undergoes the most significant change, as you build it to be longer, then add extra fire power and thrusters.

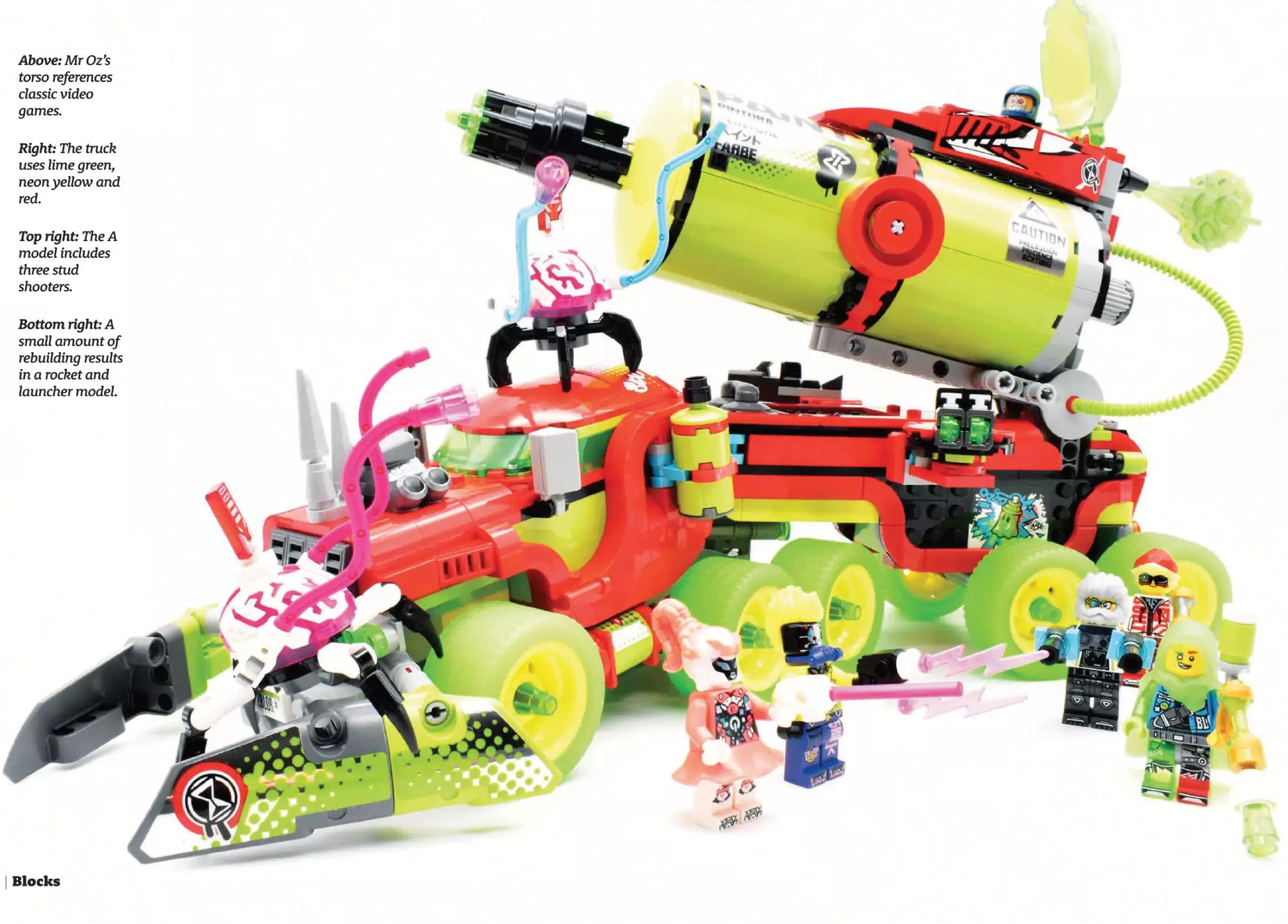
Instead of pins, Technic axles hold the spaceship in place and it is easy to pull them out to release the fighter. The fighter is a bit goofy looking and lacks some play functions alongside the launch to make it shine – dropping some paint cannisters would have been fun – but its bulk

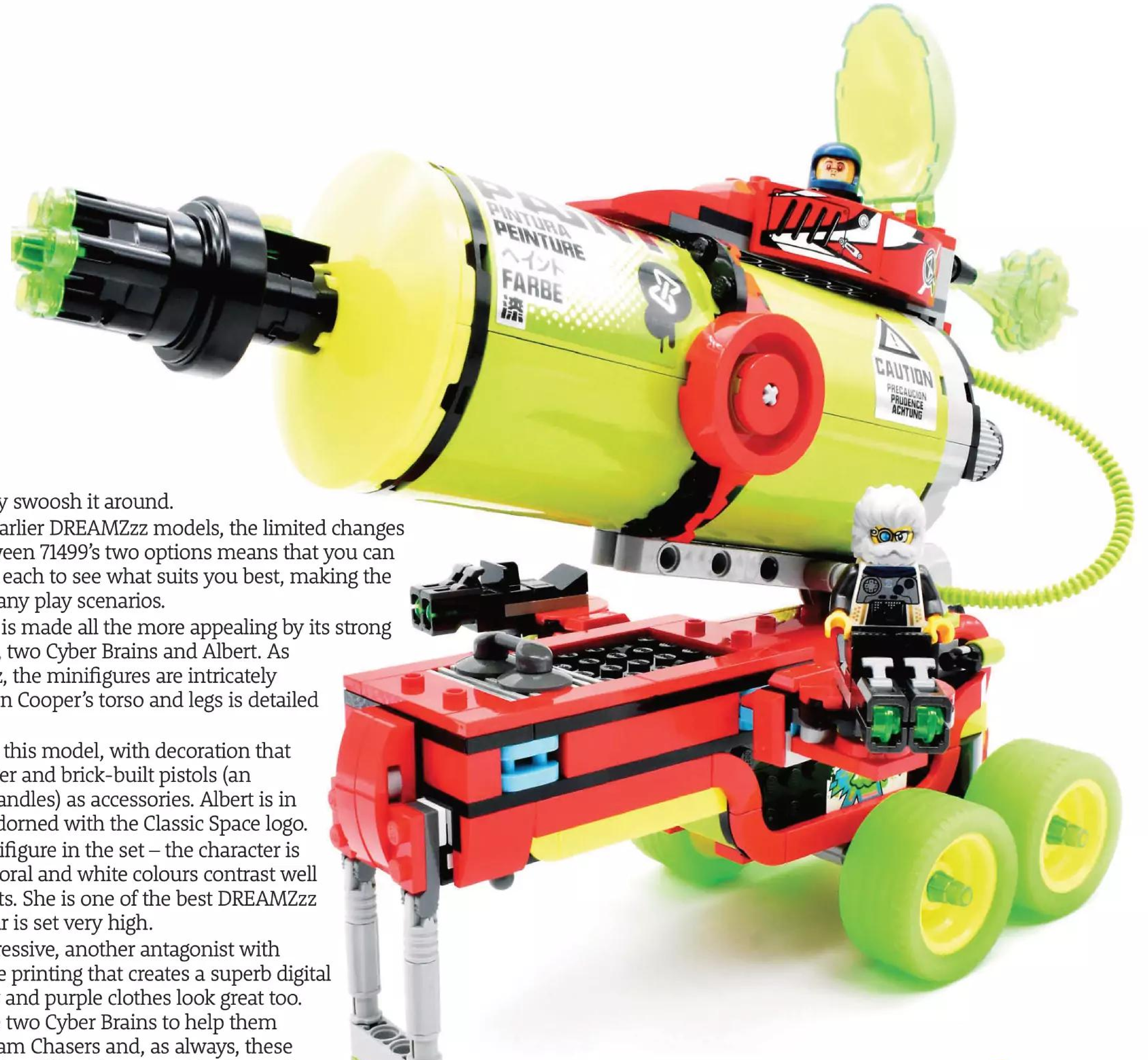
Above: *Mr Oz's torso references classic video games.*

Right: *The truck uses lime green, neon yellow and red.*

Top right: *The A model includes three stud shooters.*

Bottom right: *A small amount of rebuilding results in a rocket and launcher model.*





means you can robustly swoosh it around.

Unlike some of the earlier DREAMZzz models, the limited changes required to switch between 71499's two options means that you can easily experiment with each to see what suits you best, making the model adaptable for many play scenarios.

Engaging with 71499 is made all the more appealing by its strong cast of five minifigures, two Cyber Brains and Albert. As always with DREAMZzz, the minifigures are intricately detailed. The printing on Cooper's torso and legs is detailed and looks really good.

Mr Oz is exclusive to this model, with decoration that depicts a game controller and brick-built pistols (an excellent use of black candles) as accessories. Albert is in a dark blue spacesuit adorned with the Classic Space logo.

One debuts as a minifigure in the set – the character is a Cyber Villain whose coral and white colours contrast well against the black accents. She is one of the best DREAMZzz figures yet – and the bar is set very high.

D-Shock is also impressive, another antagonist with anaglyph torso and face printing that creates a superb digital effect. The neon yellow and purple clothes look great too. These antagonists have two Cyber Brains to help them face off against the Dream Chasers and, as always, these Lovecraftian-influenced builds with exposed brains look truly menacing.

Finally, but not least, the Mateo minifigure is new to this wave of sets, with a rubber trans-bright green cloak piece and single transparent arm and leg symbolising his pairing with Z-Blob.

71499 Mateo's Spray Paint Truck's robust size and impressive minifigure cast means its price feels justified. The move away from the commitment to having visually distinct A and B models is typical of other DREAMZzz sets released this summer, but its play potential and highly stylised look is undoubtedly appealing.

ANTHONY WALKER-COOK

Verdict
75

This bulky vehicle symbolises creativity with its imaginative concept. The core model is a great deal of fun and the minifigure roster is excellent.

PAINT
PINTURA
PEINTURE
ペイント
FARBE
CAUTION
PRECAUCIÓN
PRUDENCE
ACHTUNG

Welcome to the MINIFIGS.ME workshop!

What we do at minifigs

We're a small (some would say mini...) team here at Minifigs.me and we work together to design, print and assemble your awesome minifigs.

Making a custom minifigure should be fun for everybody which is why inclusivity and a wide range of custom printed parts are our top priority.

Whether it's a present, for your MOC or for your ever-growing collection we're always making sure that we grow alongside our customers.

Nick & Caroline

It all started back in 2012 when proud husband and wife masterminds, Nick and Caroline created some custom minifigs for Team GB's athletes...

Pete Reed

Another present! Thanks to minifigs for sending my little Lego Avatar through. pic.twitter.com/KnZRbAO9

Following
Reply
Retweet
Favorite
Champ
AMAZING!
SARAH
STOREY
SUPER GREEDY FOR
GOLD

..then other people wanted to see themselves as a minifig!

Meet the Team!

Ben
Lizzie
Elliot
Steph

Design

Tom
Charlie
Sam
Jaden

Assembly

Keeley
Aleks
Joe

Marketing

Lucy
Alex
Thank You!

Customer Service

Jordan R
Jordan B

Printing

Management & HR

Evil Overlord

Q&A with our Master Minibuilder

When he's not managing the assembly side of the workshop, Tom is a whizz at creating our minibuild displays. Let's go and bother him with some quick questions...

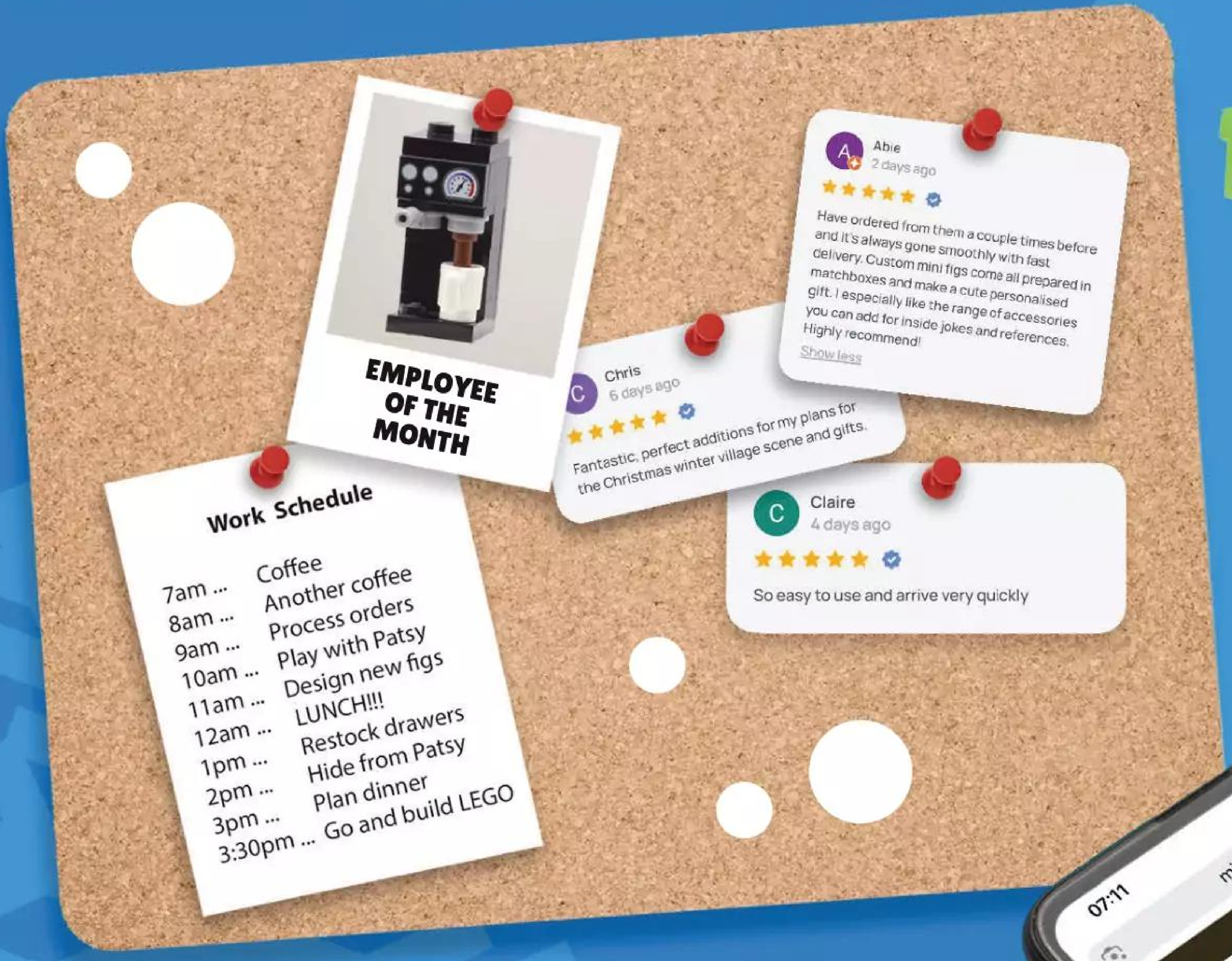
Favourite minibuild?
Difficult! I have a top 3 if that's not cheating! Either Night Dragon, 10th Time Lord's console or the Sci Fi hallway (I can't decide!)

Most unusual part used and for what?
The Technic Wedge Belt Wheel (Pulley) - for the 10th Time Lord's console, which I used to attach X6 nougat (plates, round 1 x 1 with bar handle) to separate the console into six parts.

First LEGO set?
Set number 7243, LEGO city construction site (which may have lead me to do what I'm doing today!)

Wishlist LEGO set?
10232 Palace Cinema or 76300 Arkham Asylum.

Favourite part about working at Minifigs.me?
I get to work with something I've always been passionate about, but it's probably the people I work with, they've been a huge part of why I love working here.



Abie
2 days ago
★★★★★
Have ordered from them a couple times before and it's always gone smoothly with fast delivery. Custom mini figs come all prepared in matchboxes and make a cute personalised gift. I especially like the range of accessories you can add for inside jokes and references. Highly recommend!
Show less

Chris
6 days ago
★★★★★
Fantastic, perfect additions for my plans for the Christmas winter village scene and gifts.

Claire
4 days ago
★★★★★
So easy to use and arrive very quickly

Work Schedule
7am ... Coffee
8am ... Another coffee
9am ... Process orders
10am ... Play with Patsy
11am ... Design new figs
12am ... LUNCH!!!
1pm ... Restock drawers
2pm ... Hide from Patsy
3pm ... Plan dinner
3:30pm ... Go and build LEGO

The New Minifig Builder

We're really excited to share with you our new and improved minifig builder! Creating a figure has never been this fun or easy and we've been building figs for centuries...

Navigation and speed have been our top priorities (although you could spend hours on the builder if you wanted to) so that you can recieve your wonderful creations as soon as possible.

We're always looking to improve this process so go and have a play and let us know what you think about it.

Start building

Get ready for the Christmas party!

What's been happening over at Design? Well, awesome things!

Lizzie has been working on some new wedding dresses and sports kits. She's also been channeling her inner Dr. No and firing up the laser cutter (thankfully to make frames and displays...not trying to kill secret agents!)

Ben has been cracking on with a load of bespoke orders which are always challenging but fun! Baseball's also been the name of the game and we think he's hit a homerun with the new shirts.

Elliot has designed a new roarsome christmas jumper and has also created our first 3D-printed hair piece!

Speaking of 3D-printing...

HAVE A ROAR-SOME CHRISTMAS

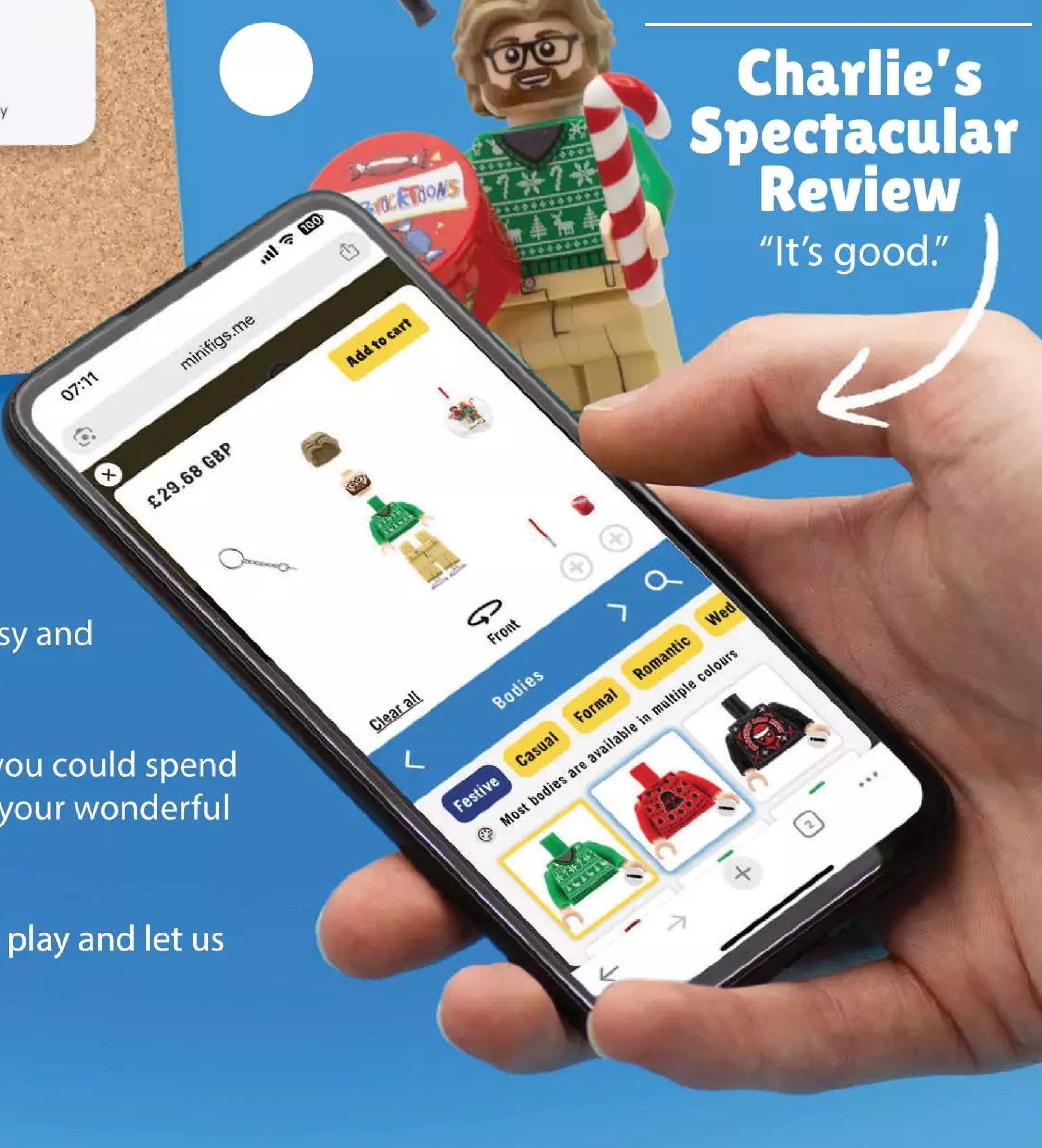
The 3D Lab

Jordan and Elliot have been getting nerdy with our 3D-printer and have now got an impressive collection of accessories to their name.

From ping pong paddles, to battleaxes, they're filling in the gaps with accessories compatible with genuine LEGO parts!

Charlie's Spectacular Review

"It's good."



10348

Theme: Botanicals / **Price:** £54.99, $59.99, €59.99 /
Recommended age: 18+ / **Pieces:** 474 / **Minifigures:** 0

Japanese Maple Tree

Japanese Maples have been cultivated as bonsais, making it an appropriate plant for the LEGO Botanicals theme to offer at a similar scale to 10281 Bonsai Tree. It's a quick and breezy build, with an unfussy and repetitive approach to capturing the unique subject matter.

You build the trunk as a separate section then slot it onto the base, adding sections to the front and back to give it texture and suggest roots. You then add various branches, all with similar connectors. It's then time to put together the sections with leaves – and there are only two different methods for doing so. As you complete each mini build, you add it to the tree until it has plenty of leaves.

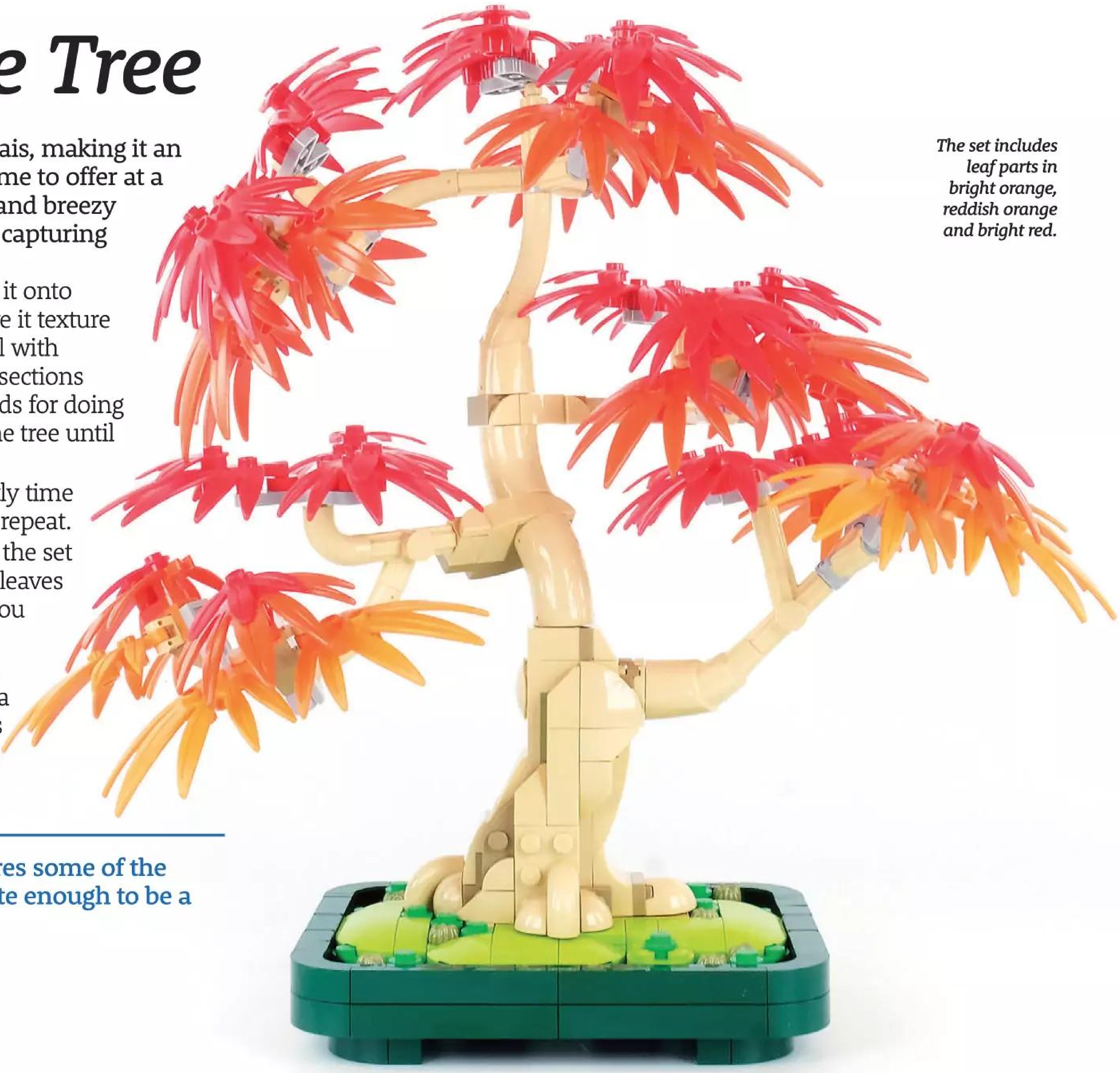
Because the build moves so fast, there is not exactly time to get bored, but it is a shame that so many sections repeat.

The leaf element that the design team selected for the set is pretty much spot on when it comes to shape. The leaves are a bit oversized though relative to the tree when you compare the model to actual Japanese Maples.

The finished build is very striking, particularly with the red leaves contrasting with the light branches. It's a shame about the grey elements that are in the mix, as they do take some authenticity away from the model.

GRAHAM E. HANCOCK

Verdict
64
This decent addition to Botanicals captures some of the Japanese Maple's traits, but is not accurate enough to be a top tier model.

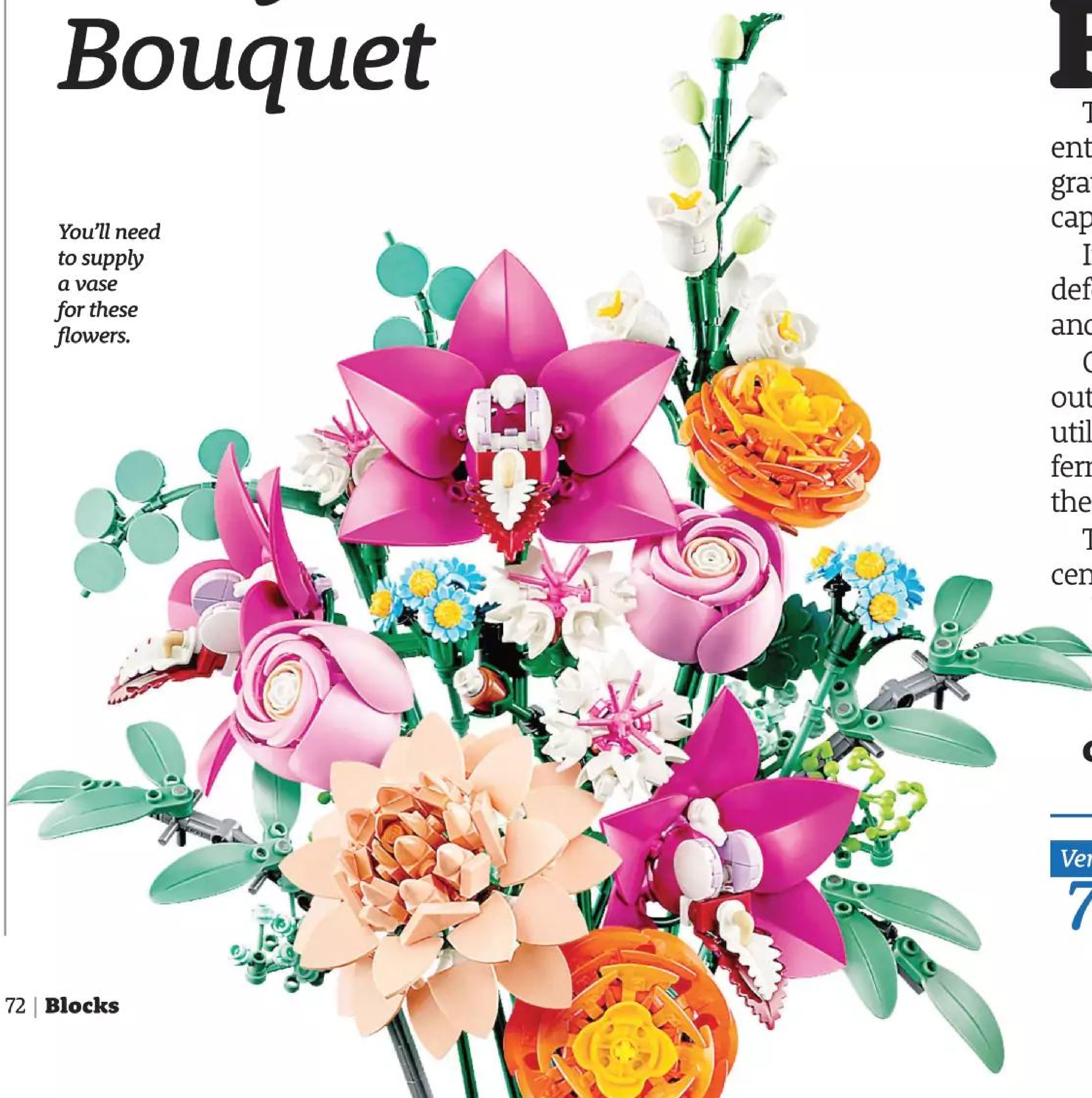


The set includes leaf parts in bright orange, reddish orange and bright red.

10342

Theme: Botanicals / **Price:** £54.99, $59.99, €59.99 /
Recommended age: 18+ / **Pieces:** 749 / **Minifigures:** 0

Pretty Pink Flower Bouquet



You'll need to supply a vase for these flowers.

Flower bouquet sets have become the home of the wildest parts usage in the LEGO portfolio. To recreate unique plant species, the design team has been repurposing elements in very ingenious ways.

The ranunculus is one of the most impressive in that regard, as it entirely uses axe heads in orange for the petals. While this could be gratuitous parts usage for the sake of it, the element is in fact perfect for capturing the many layered petals that the flower has.

If axe heads are too violent for you, then the waterlily dahlia uses defensive shields for its petals. They connect using skeleton arm pieces and take a bit of attaching, but the glorious end result is worth it.

Of all of the flowers in the set, the boat orchid is the one that stands out the most. The petals used for this one are new and will surely find utility elsewhere in the theme. They are combined with a white frog and fern elements, which really capture the unique shapes that you seen on these plants.

The cornflowers are constructed with a minifigure accessory in the centre, which then has egg shell elements clipped all around it and the larger flower stem on the top. It's not a perfect recreation of the actual plant, but it's quite effective.

Each bouquet set builds on what has come before and this is another excellent entry in Botanicals.

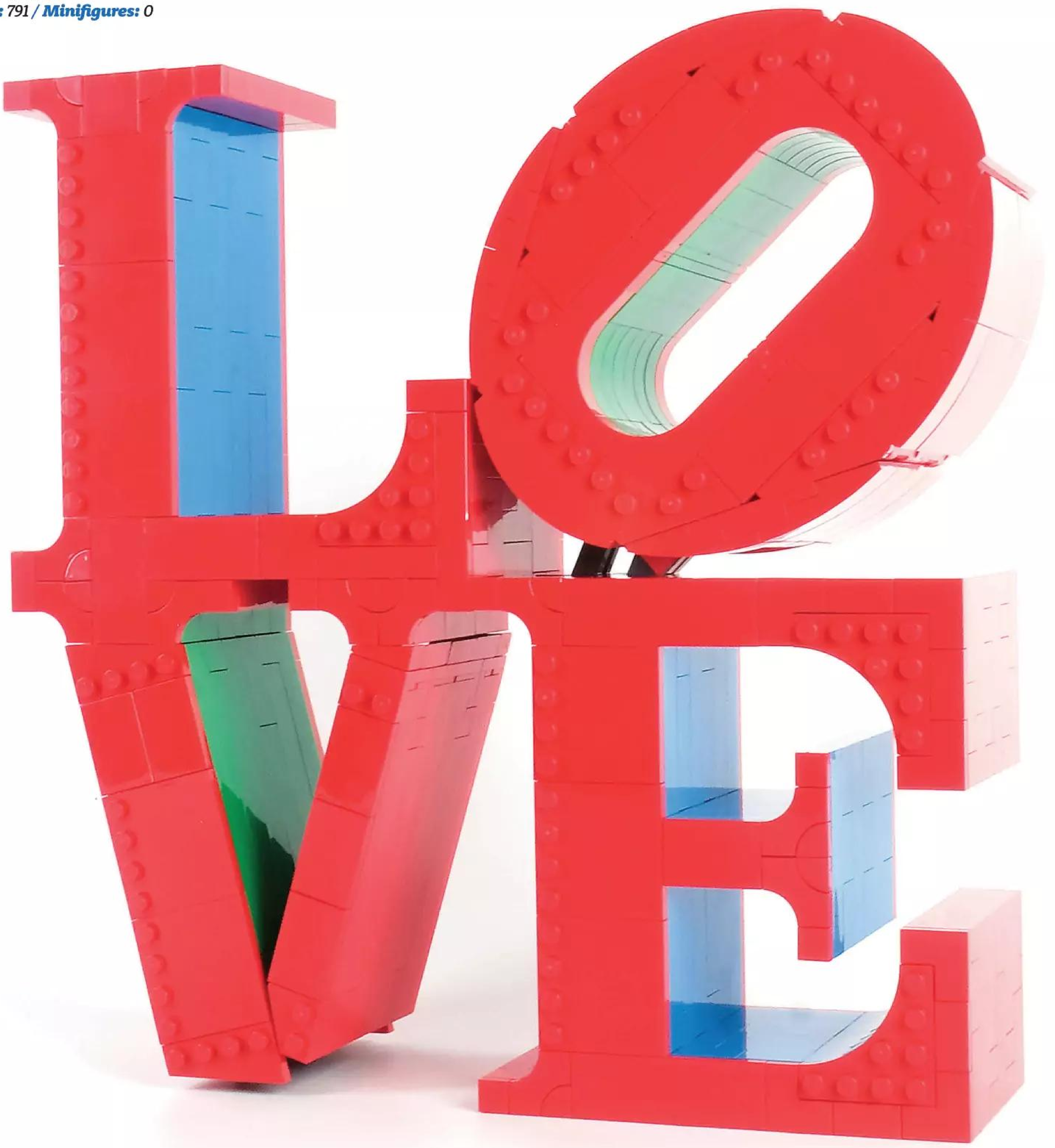
GRAHAM E. HANCOCK

Verdict
78
Some fabulous part usage means that this bouquet mostly looks very accurate to the real life flowers it recreates. Be sure to savour the clever element usage.

31214

Theme: *Art /* ***Price:*** *£69.99, $79.99, €79.99 /*
Recommended age: *18+ /* ***Pieces:*** *791 /* ***Minifigures:*** *0*

LOVE



Each letter is built separately then connected to the rest.

Robert Indiana painted the original artwork in 1965.

Few pieces of art capture the spirit of the 1960s and 1970s like LOVE. Robert Indiana created the sculpture, made from Cor-Ten steel, in 1970, inspired by his painting from 1965. It has since been taken as a symbol of the Pop art scene, due in no small part to being one of the best-known examples of the genre. The artist produced more than 50 editions of the sculpture – the original is still on display at the Indianapolis Museum of Art.

The vibrant colours of LEGO bricks lend themselves well to pop art, so it makes perfect sense for this particular piece to be adapted as a set. While more traditional art has to be abstracted and adapted in order to be possible using the System, this can be a pretty precise replica thanks to the clean shapes of the actual sculpture.

Building the set is reassuringly simple. You start each letter with a base of plates, then layer up bricks around the edges to get the shapes. This continues until you reach the top, then you top the letter off with mainly tile elements. When you hold the first finished letter in your hand, it feels nice and chunky.

The way that the bricks are arranged is really clever, as they are perfectly positioned to capture the serif font. What's more, each one is built in two tones; red is of course the dominant colour, but either green or blue is used, with that hue showing on the 'inside'. The contrast works really well and is influenced by the colours of the original 1965 painting.

This is not a remotely challenging build – but sometimes it can be fun to just lay a lot of bricks down instead of dealing with fiddly bars and stud offsets. If you go in knowing that this is not going to delight you with surprising techniques, you'll enjoy it.

Some aspects are pretty nifty though – it's very impressive that the design team managed to captures the letters so accurately. The way the 'O' connects is also a treat, as a section is built off the bottom that cleverly slots into the 'E', with a Mixels offering a really firm connection.

In fact, when you put all four letters together, the entire thing is really solid. The vibrant colours are perfect for the subject matter and it's a nice bit of décor for your LEGO room.

GRAHAM E. HANCOCK

Verdict
65
A simple construction process results in a model that's aesthetically spot on, capturing the look and proportions of the actual LOVE sculpture.

21062

Theme: *Architecture* / ***Price:*** *£139.99, $159.99, €159.99* /
Recommended age: *18+* / ***Pieces:*** *1,880* / ***Minifigures:*** *3*

Trevi Fountain

Tossing a coin into the Trevi Fountain guarantees you will return to Rome – but this Architecture set allows you to recreate a piece of the city's history at home

Some landmarks can only be truly appreciated in person, as the photo simply does not do them justice. That's certainly true of the Trevi Fountain in Rome – the true majesty and grandeur of it is only apparent as you stand in front of it, looking up and admiring this piece of Italian history.

As the best-known site in Rome after the Colosseum, it makes perfect sense for a LEGO set. Architecture has visited it before in 21020 Trevi Fountain, a 731 piece model delivered in the minimalist style that used to be a hallmark of the theme. 21062 Trevi Fountain presents a much larger version of the landmark, leaning into the way that Architecture now delivers sets at a much larger scale.

The word 'Trevi' derives from the Latin word 'trivium', which means three streets, because the location of the fountain was at the junction of three separate roads (although today it sits at the intersection of five roads).

Building the set begins with the base, which starts off with frame and pavement that will surround the fountain. You then move to the water section, which is built separately and then connected to the base frame. Laying the many tiles could be tedious but is actually quite satisfying. Different coloured plates beneath the transparent blue tiles hint at the movement of the water.

At the back of this area, you build a rather clever construction that will support what follows, with studs in different directions. It's then time to build the cascading water at the front, which is an entirely separate section that connects to the back area using SNOT technique. The way it slots in just right is rather masterful, especially with how convincingly the cheese slopes represent flowing water hitting the water below.

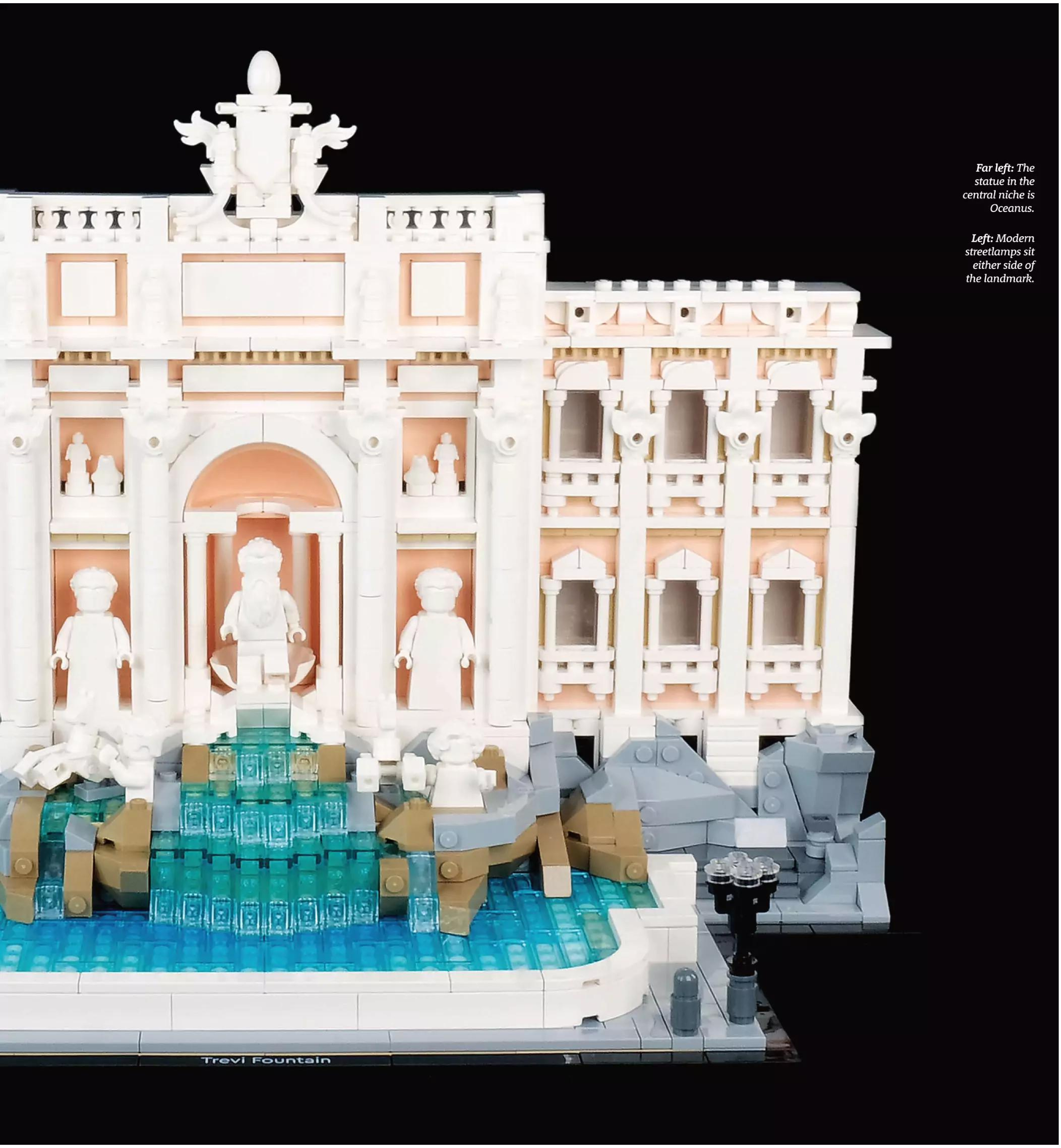
Clipping together and then adding the various rock sections is enjoyable, as they use slopes in interesting ways to convey the haphazard rockwork. They enhance the look of the flowing water and give it a sense of place. Because they are clipped into place using classic SNOT technique though, the angles are not as varied as they are on the real fountain – they would be more convincing if some of them were offset to create a more curved shape rather than the slightly square shape that is clearly on grid.

There are many offsets throughout the build though, particularly when you start to build up the ornate back of the fountain. Jumper plates ensure that things can be centred when they need to be, for example allowing columns to sit at the centre of 1x2 bricks.

You construct each window in the same way, a marvellous little build that uses 1x3 rounded plates with holes in conjunction with bar pieces to capture some subtle shaping. The crest that sits at the top of the structure is also very intricately captured using the System – an egg, micro figures and feathers come together in a pleasing way.

It's very nice to see the various levels build up as you assemble different sub-assemblies and then attach them to the model, with different layers and levels matching the real landmark.

Minifigures represent the statues from the fountain, to varying degrees of the success. The three at the back feel appropriate, but the two within the rockwork feel off, perhaps too large for their surroundings. The legs on the horses are too thick and sausage elements may have proved a



Far left: *The statue in the central niche is Oceanus.*

Left: *Modern streetlamps sit either side of the landmark.*

better choice. While they are only a small part of the model, they have an outsized visual impact and draw your eye. In this area of the build, the design team should have opted for a more intricate and finessed solution.

The colour selection in the model works well; white is right for the most part, but it would be dull if the entire build was in that single hue, so the light nougat stops it from becoming dull.

Architecture sets abstract the subject matter, offering an interpretation of the location in question rather than a scale model of it. In the case of 21062 Trevi Fountain, the abstracting is not too extreme – it very accurately represents the location, especially when it comes to the actual architecture component. The rockwork around the actual water feels somewhat compressed and, despite some clever mixing of slope elements, a little uniform.

On balance though, it is a very successful and pleasing build that captures the feel of the Trevi Fountain. The set lends itself very well to display; because the back is tall and wide, but the front is low, it sits very nicely on a shelf, almost providing its own backdrop.

If you have spent time in Rome and enjoyed visiting this location, then it will make a worthy addition to your collection.

GRAHAM E. HANCOCK

Verdict

80

This cleverly rendered recreation creation of an iconic Roman landmark is enjoyable to build and has real display presence.

90-100	*An exceptional set that does something special, original or innovative.*
80-90	*A top tier LEGO set that is close to perfect, showing what the System can do.*
70-80	*Strongly recommended, a very good LEGO set providing a really enjoyable build.*
60-70	*A decent set that will offer a satisfying experience, but may have a few flaws.*
50-60	*Still recommended by Blocks, but expect an average and pedestrian build.*
40-50	*Perhaps worth buying, but a set that falls below the usual high LEGO standards.*
25-40	*A disappointing set that might have some redeeming qualities.*
1-25	*A set that's only for the dedicated collectors; there are many better options.*

REVIEWED **THIS MONTH**

SET	THEME	SCORE
10356 Star Trek Enterprise	Icons	85
77057 Creative Houses: Seasons of Fun	Animal Crossing	62
77056 Blathers's Museum Collection	Animal Crossing	63
21360 Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory	Ideas	76
40801 Mike, Dustin, Lucas & Will Figures	BrickHeadz	66
43279 WALL-E & EVE	Disney	80
43271 Lucky & Penny 101 Dalmatians Puppies	Disney	58
71494 Zoey's Time Owl	DREAMZzz	60
71492 Mateo's Fire Chameleon	DREAMZzz	73
71499 Mateo's Spray Paint Truck	DREAMZzz	75
10348 Japanese Maple Tree	Botanicals	64
10342 Pretty Pink Flower Bouquet	Botanicals	78
31214 LOVE	Art	65
21062 Trevi Fountain	Architecture	80

Buy these sets

blocksmag.com/goto/lego

NEXT MONTH

Is 21363 The Goonies packed with all of the adventure and fun that you expect?

LEGO
THE GOONIES

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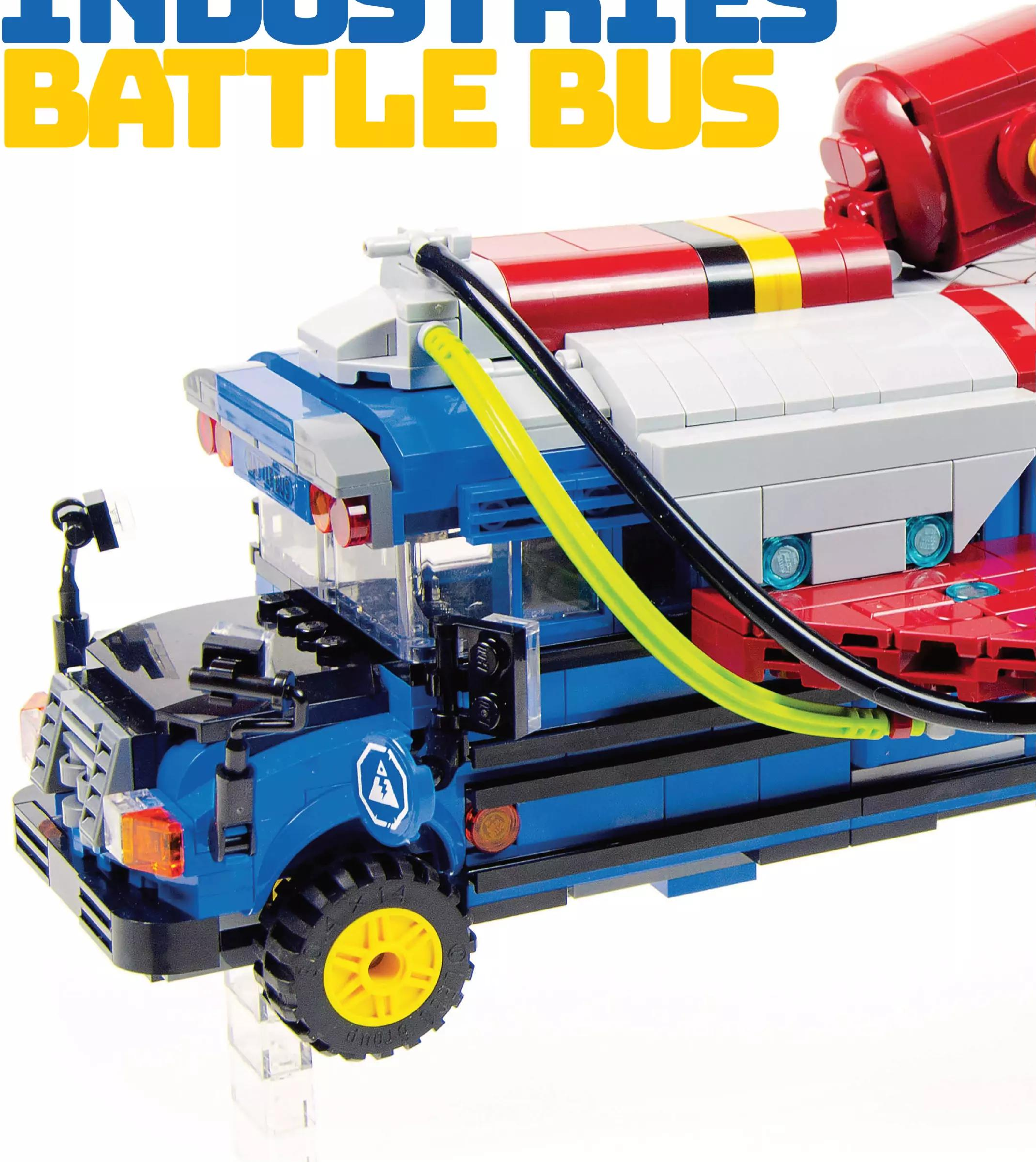
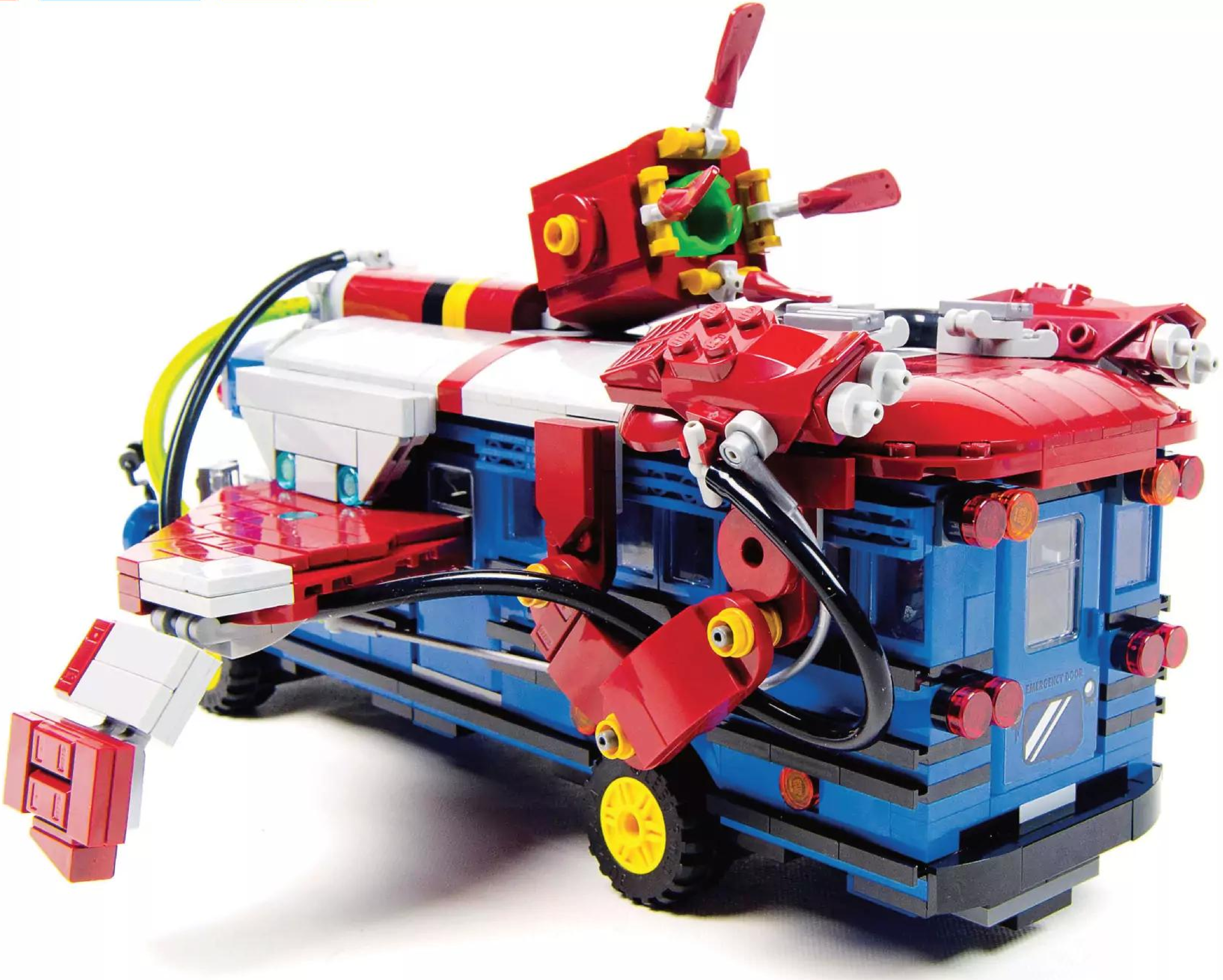
STARK INDUSTRIES BATTLE BUS



How do you defeat Galactus? You need Tony Stark to upgrade the iconic Battle Bus with all of the tech at Iron Man's disposal. Here, Blocks gives the LEGO Fortnite set a Marvel makeover to capture the epic crossover

Words: *Daniel Konstanski*



In 2023, the LEGO Group and Epic Games announced a landmark partnership that united their two enormous brands. Since then, the collaboration has produced an ongoing stream of creativity that spans both the digital and physical worlds.

The first tangible result of this partnership came in 2024 with the launch of LEGO Fortnite sets. 77073 Battle Bus is a faithful recreation of the iconic vehicle that ferries players into Fortnite's frenetic battlegrounds. The Battle Bus, instantly recognisable with its balloon-powered lift and blue school bus base, has long served as a symbol of the game's blend of humour, chaos and invention.

In Fortnite itself, the bus often changes appearance to match the game's ever-evolving seasons. It has been dressed up for holidays and reimagined in crossovers featuring other universes.

One of the most striking glow ups came in the Marvel season, in which Tony Stark upgraded the Battle Bus with the distinctive flair of Stark Industries. The balloon was replaced by a glowing Arc Reactor surrounded by fins and panels finished in dark red, gold and silver, ready to take on Galactus.

It was a perfect fusion of two fan favourite worlds, bringing Fortnite's playful creativity and Iron Man's cutting-edge design aesthetic together. This project takes the official 77073 set and reimagines it as the Stark Industries Battle Bus. The transformation captures the metallic tones and refined engineering that define Stark technology. When you put two different things together, they combine to create an almost magical quality.

The goal of this build is to capture the essence of how Fortnite reimagines the Battle Bus by surrounding an ordinary blue school bus with an extraordinary layer of technology and style. In keeping with that spirit, the approach involves retaining as much of 77073 Battle Bus as possible, while building the Stark Industries upgrade as a removable shell. The main bus remains almost entirely unaltered.

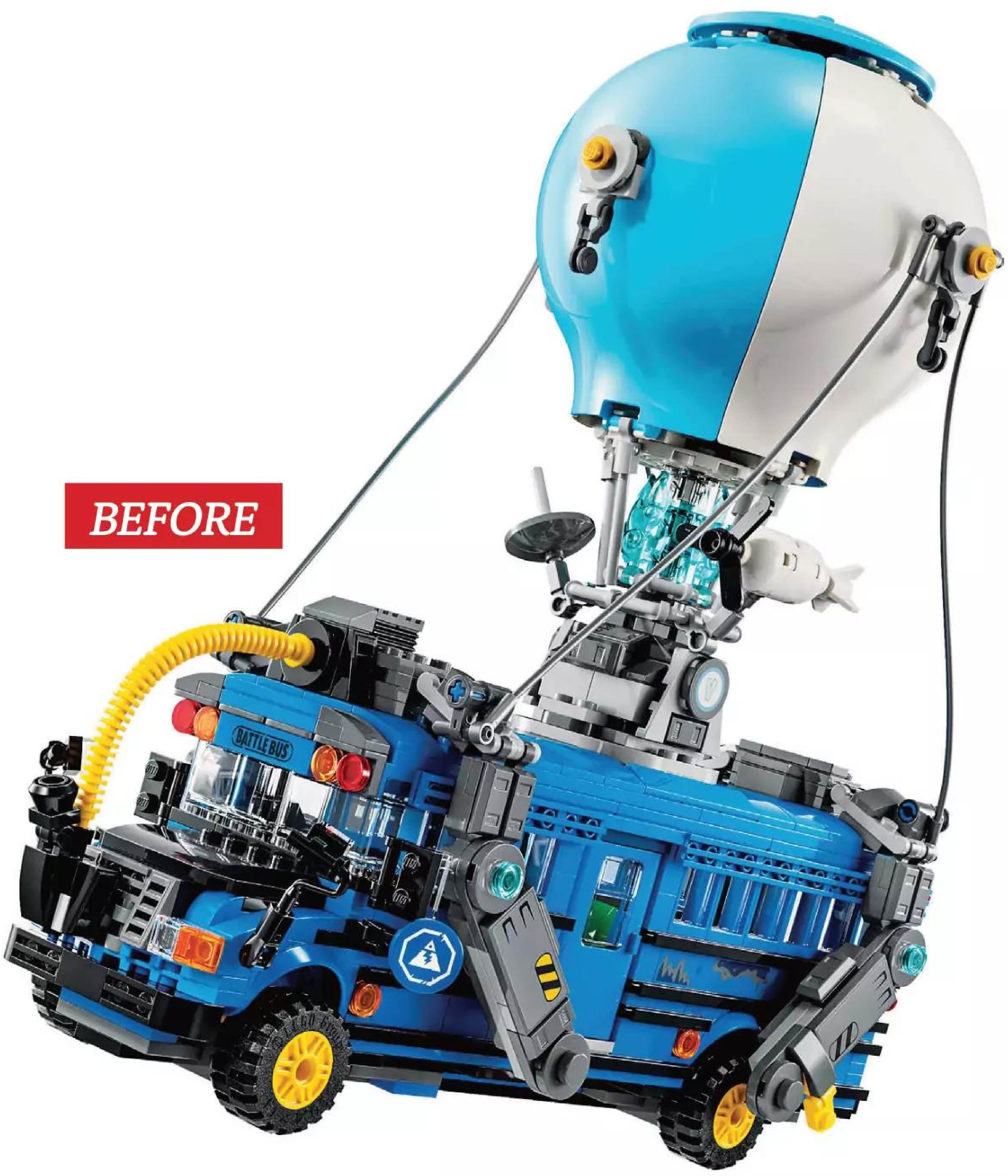
The only element that needs to be taken off is the yellow hose on the front, which interferes with the new roof section. Even that removal is minor, since the hose is easily reattached when the model is restored to its original configuration. The rest of the conversion relies on replacing the roof, which is already removable in the set's design, to allow access to the interior.

Maintaining the authentic Stark Industries look means working within a focused palette of dark red, light bluish grey and pearl gold. Although the LEGO Group offers a number of silver elements, the shapes needed for this build do not exist in that colour. Light bluish grey serves as an excellent substitute, offering the same metallic impression while keeping the model visually cohesive and affordable to build.

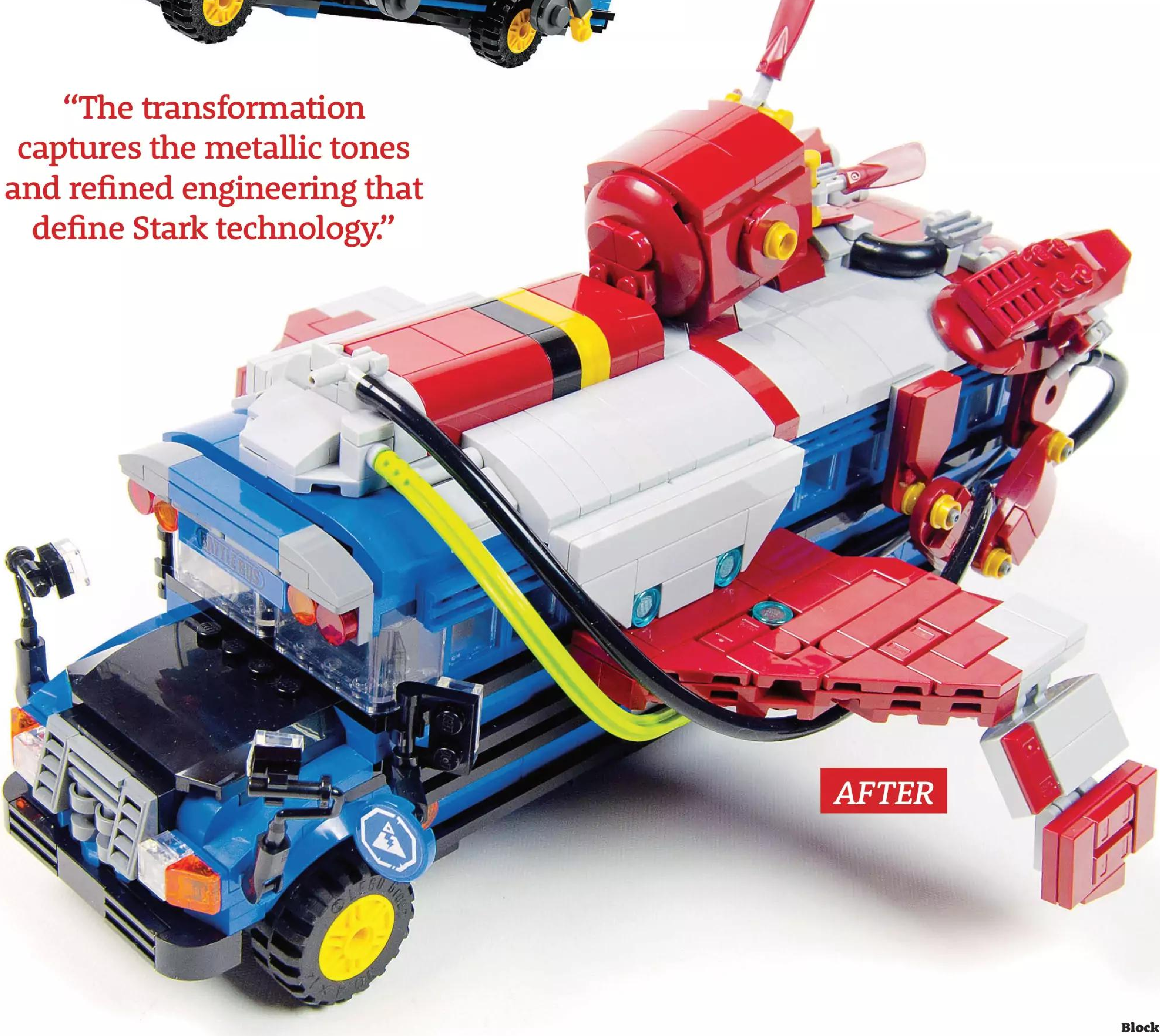
Capturing the angled geometry of the Fortnite version requires an assortment of brackets, clips and SNOT elements that allow for unconventional connections. Many of the assemblies hang or attach at unique angles, which gives the finished model its sleek appearance. To complete the effect, flexible hose elements recreate the colourful wiring seen across the in-game vehicle.

This project was created with support from LEGO Pick a Brick

Visit LEGO.com's Pick a Brick service to buy loose elements in whatever quantities you need. This project uses pieces provided by LEGO Pick a Brick, demonstrating what you can do when you take a LEGO set and add more bricks! Take inspiration from this specific build or let your imagination run wild – be sure to share what you create with Blocks.


BEFORE

> "The transformation captures the metallic tones and refined engineering that define Stark technology."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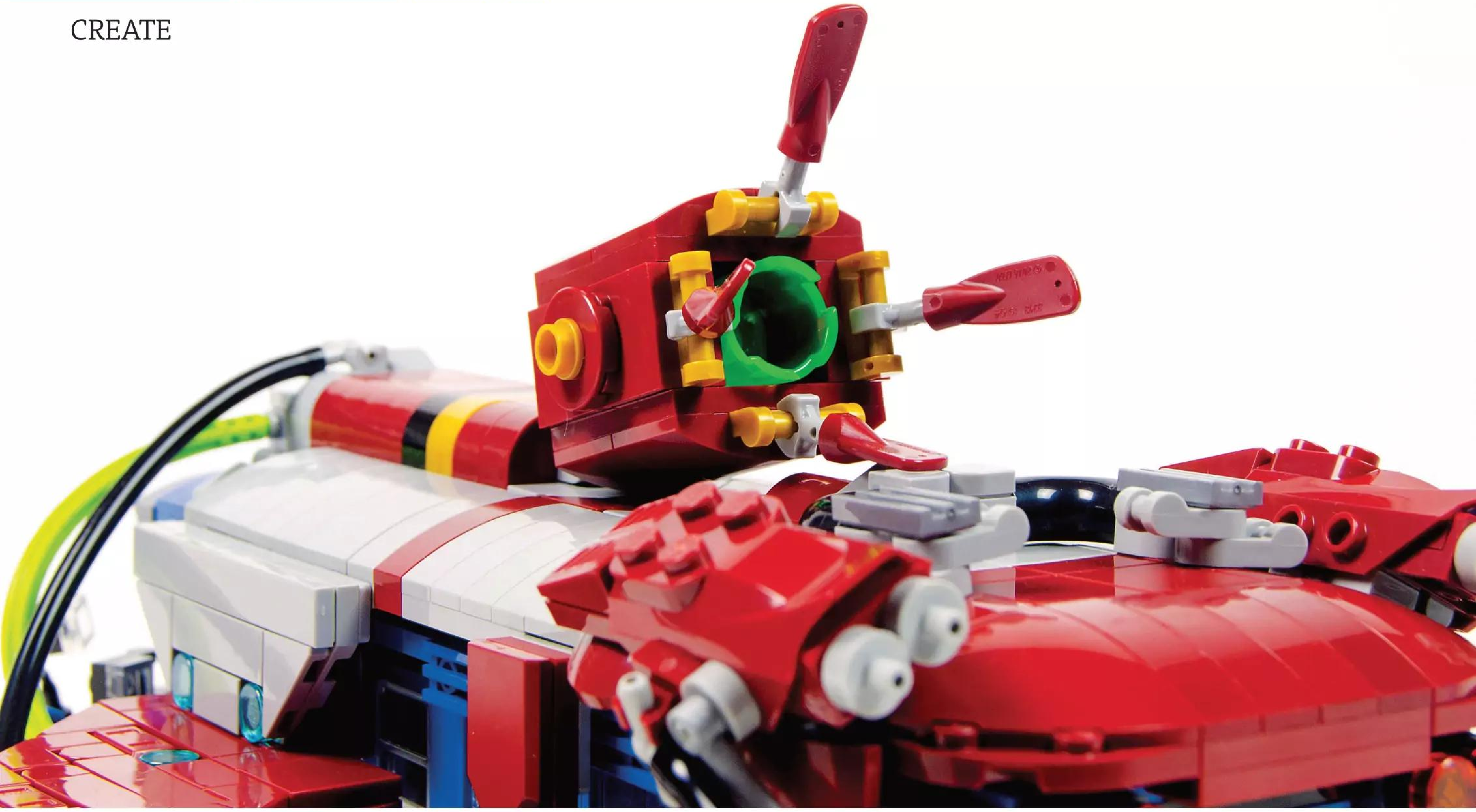

ARC REACTOR

The Arc Reactor is literally forever linked to Tony Stark, from the moment in the MCU that he builds one in a cave from a pile of scrap. In Fortnite, the hot air balloon that usually provides lift to the Battle Bus is swapped for a massive Arc Reactor on the Stark Industries Battle Bus.

Strangely, the in-game version glows green rather than the blue seen in the films, a detail faithfully captured in this mod to the set. The Battle Bus Arc Reactor is surrounded by small fins that echo the flight stabilisers built into Iron Man suits. These likely function as directional vents for steering the vehicle. Paddle elements provide the ideal shape to represent those fins while remaining sturdy enough to hold their position when attached to clips.

The circular housing of the reactor is one of the most challenging aspects of the build. A blend of SNOT bricks and curved slopes achieve the smooth, rounded edges needed to mimic the reactor's distinctive energy core. Once complete, the Arc Reactor is the centrepiece of the model as, both visually and functionally, it is the key component.

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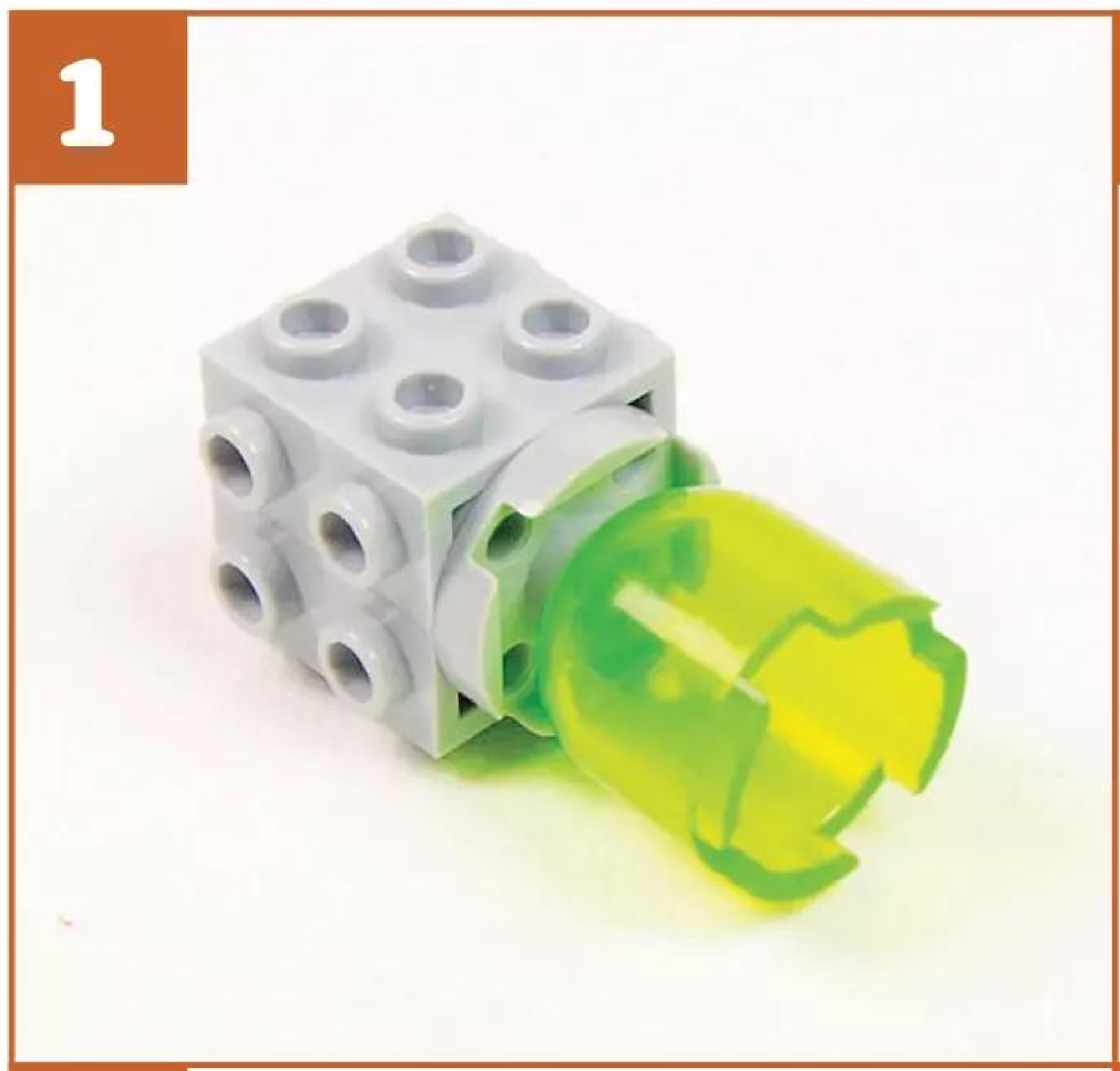

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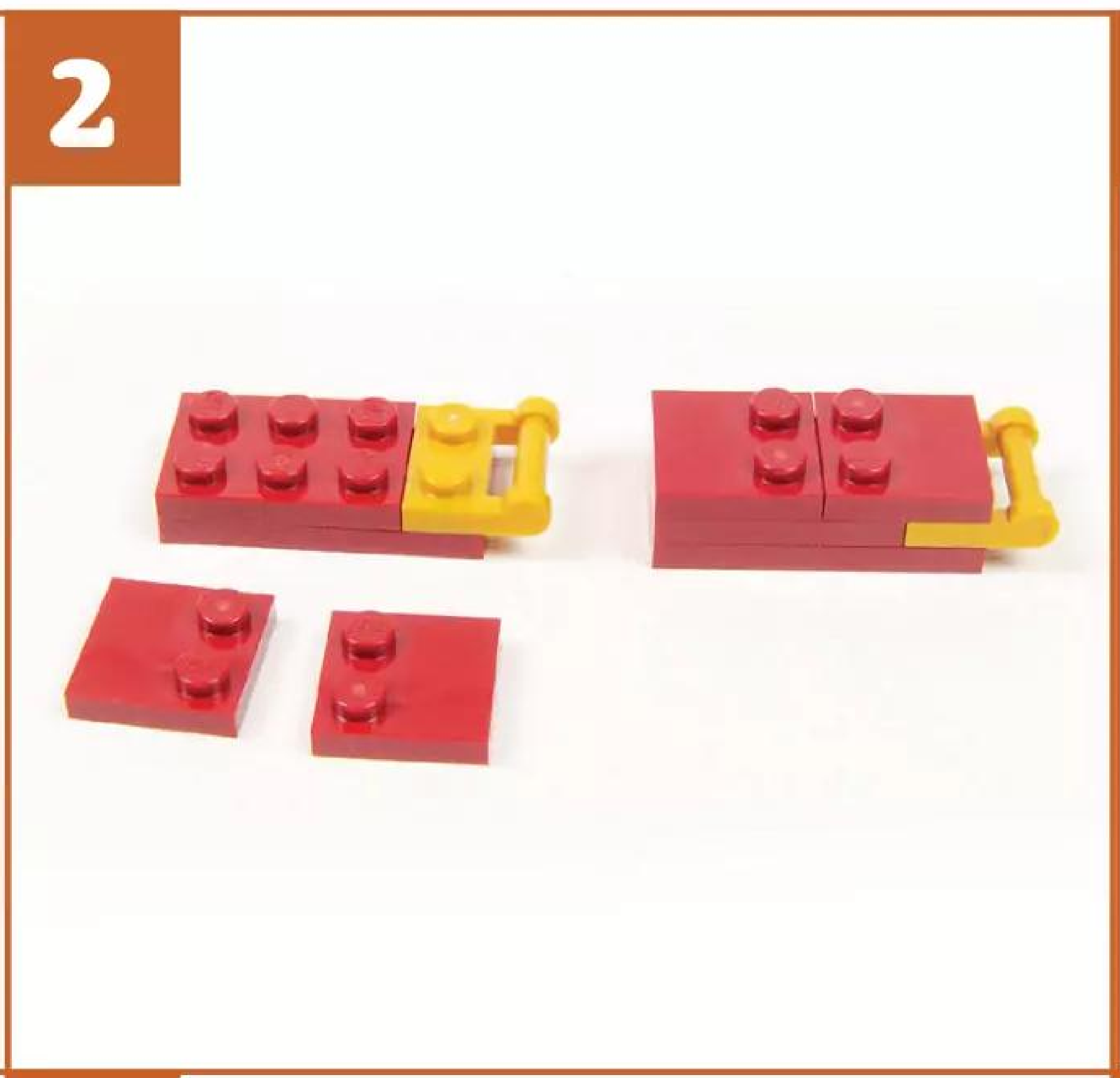

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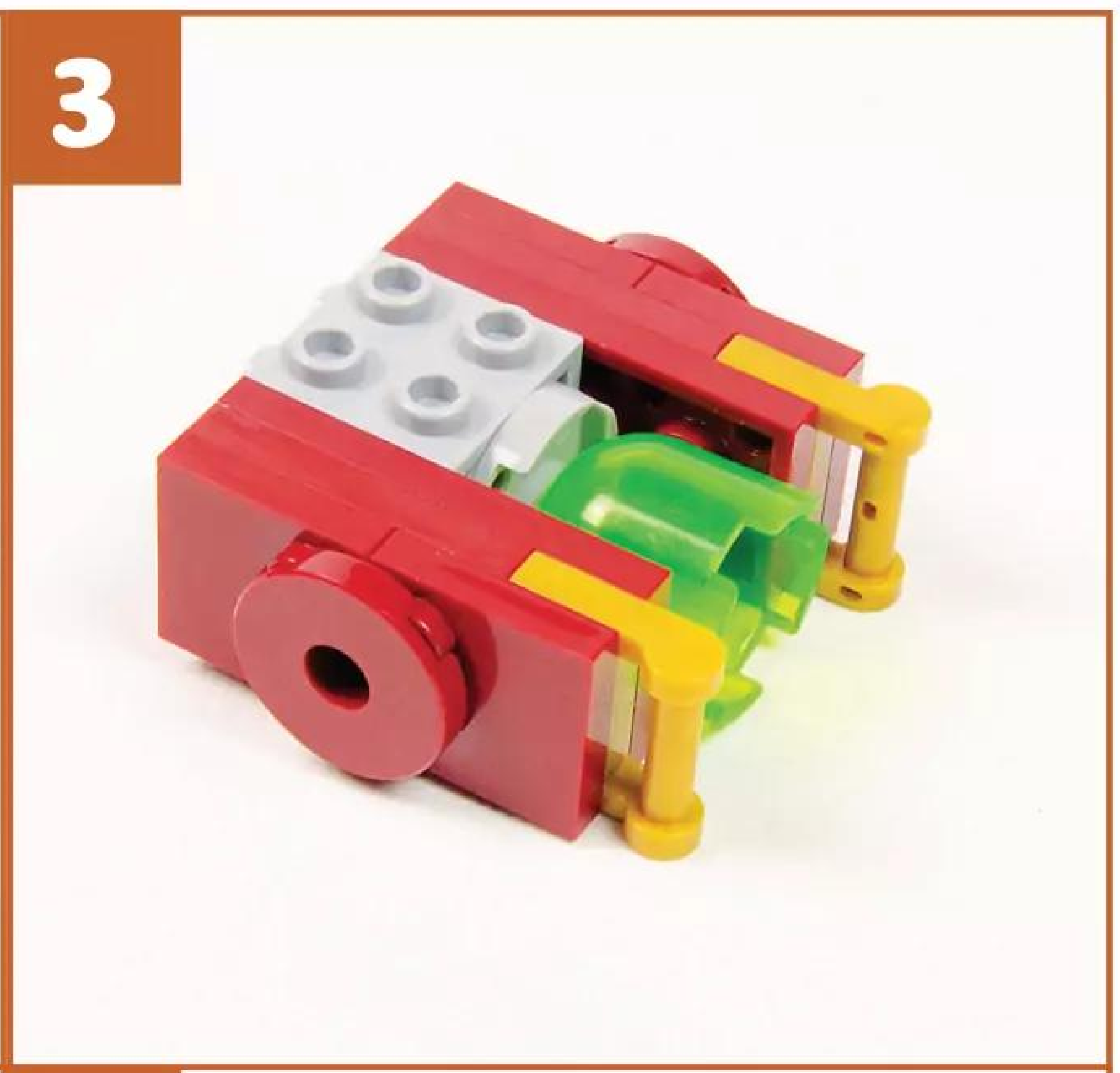

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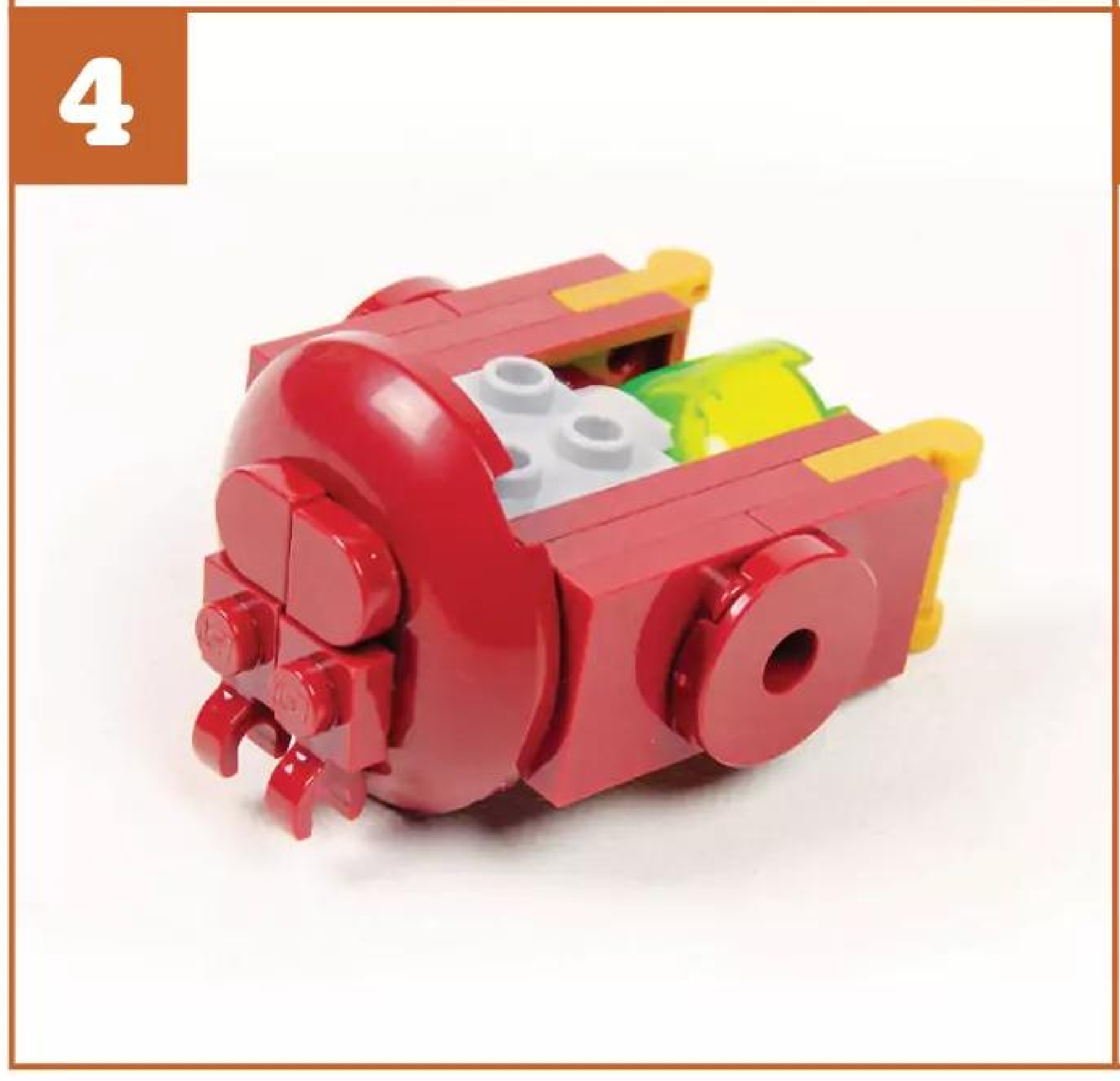

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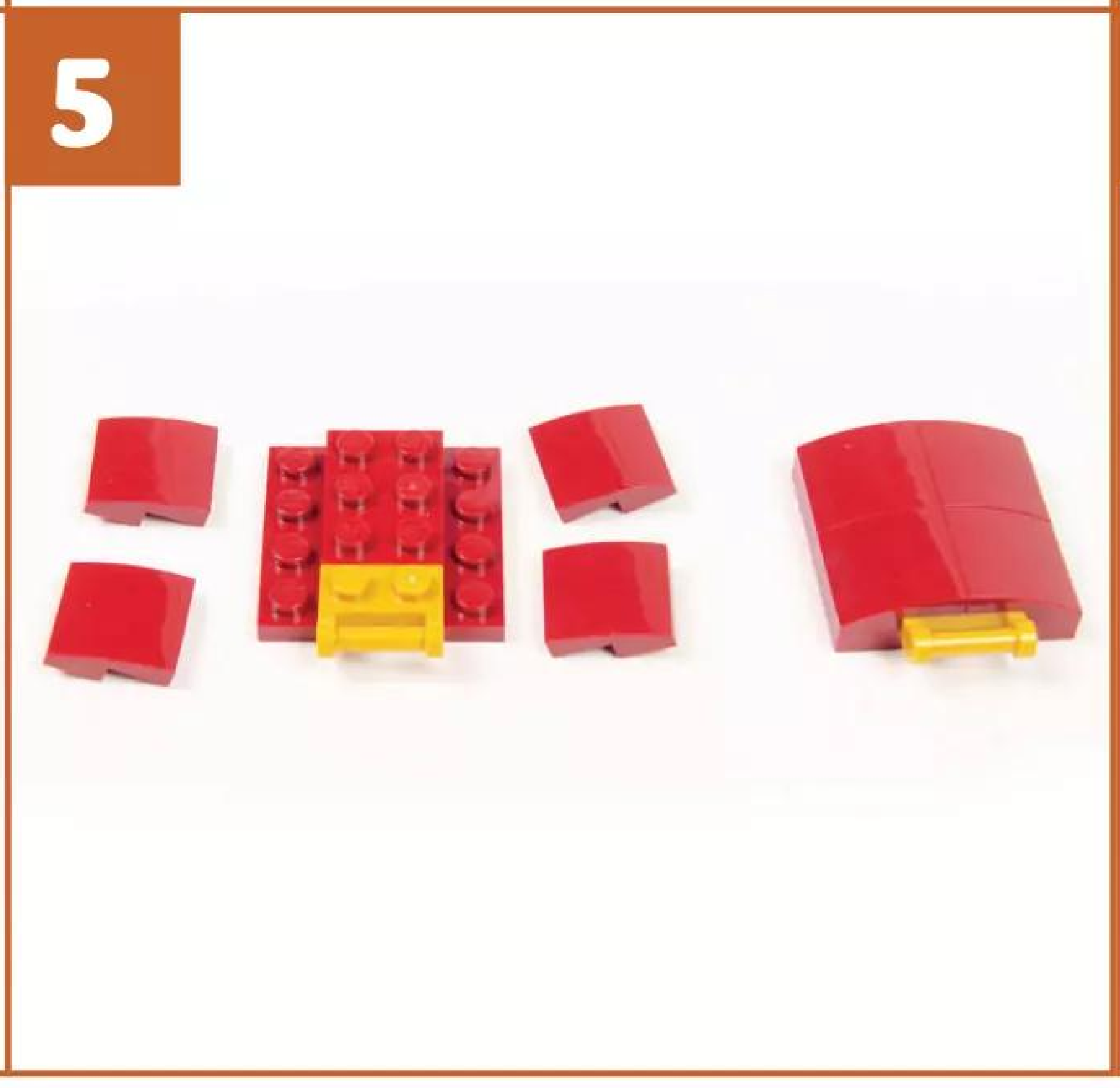

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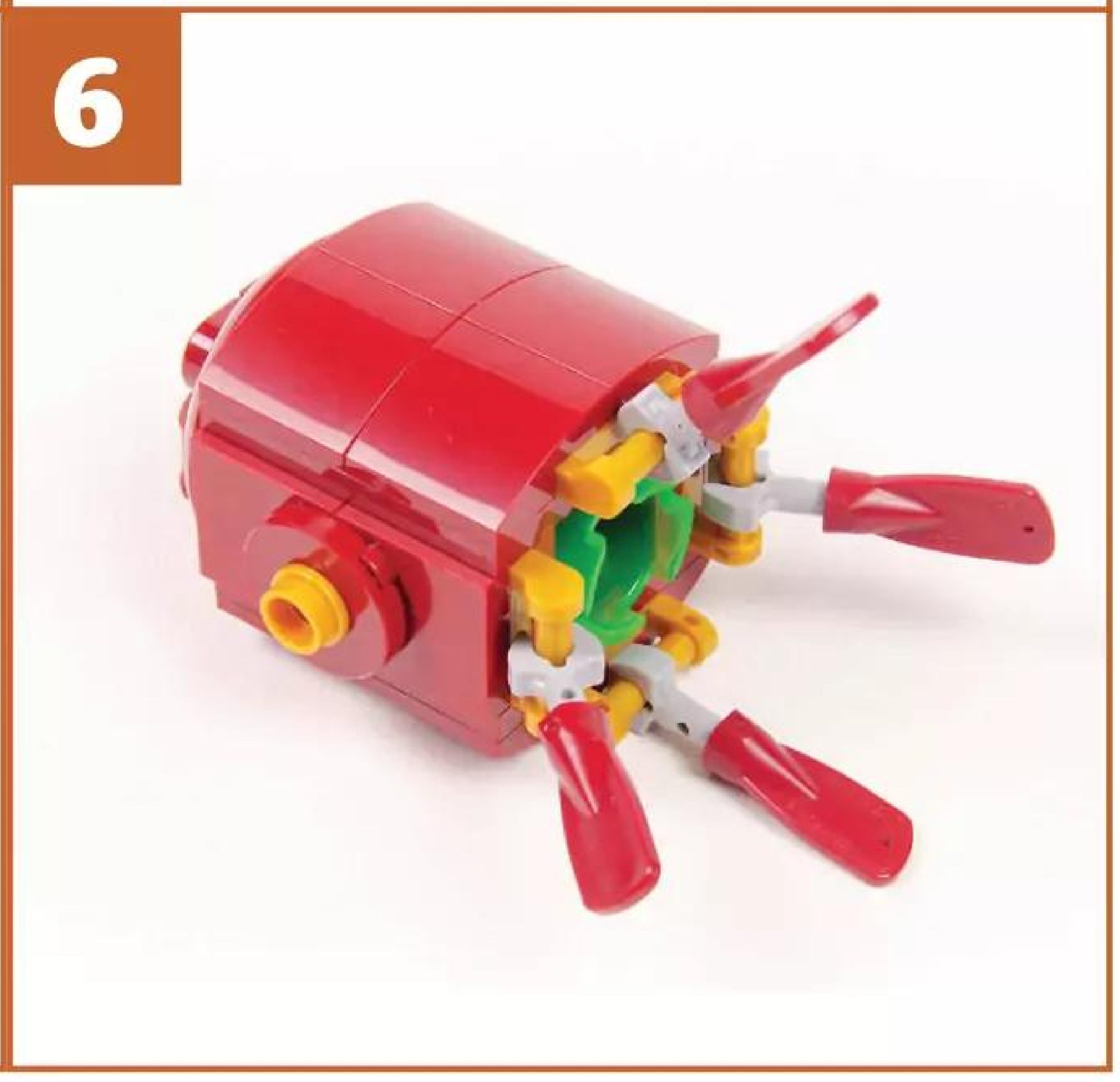

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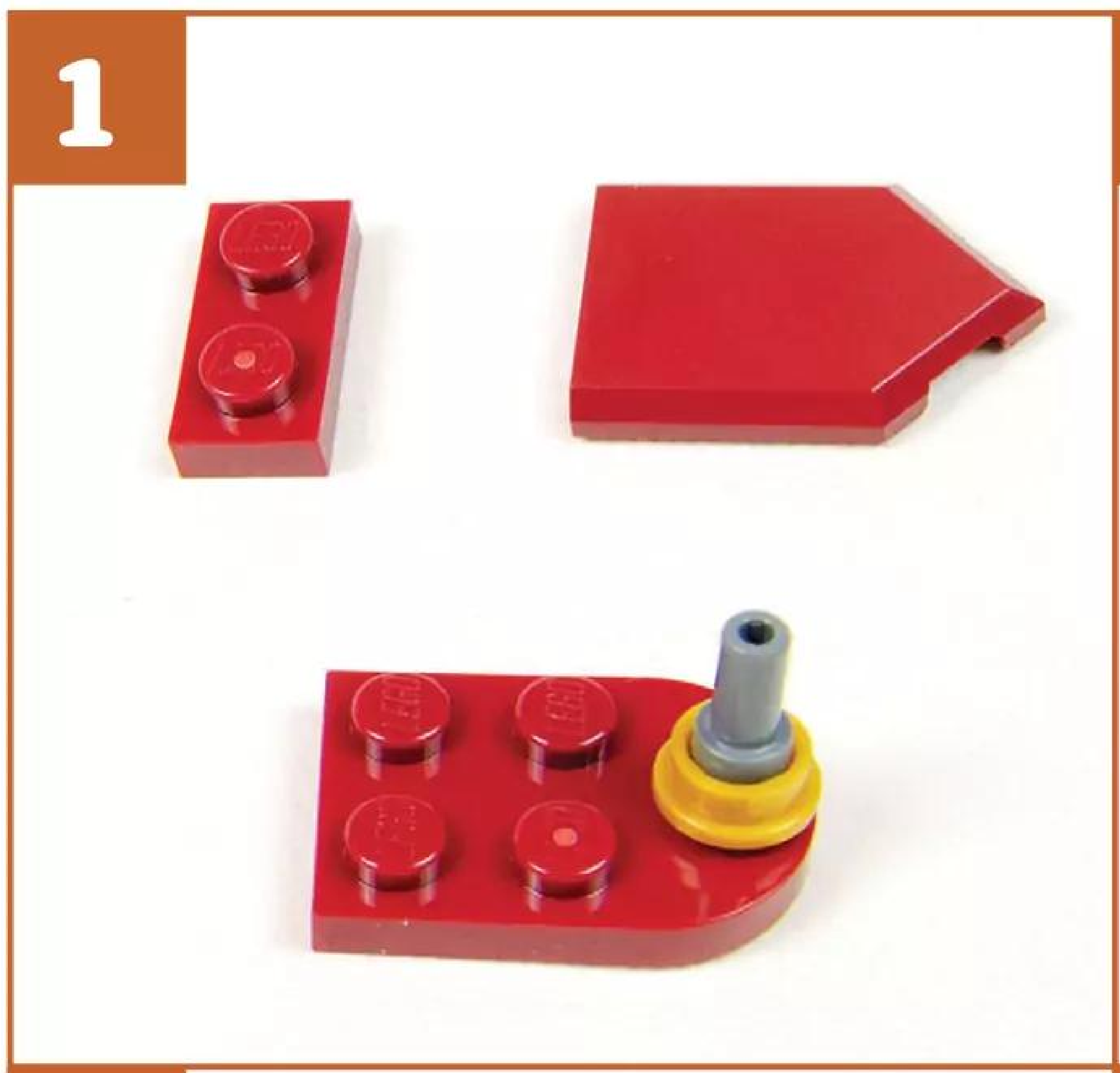

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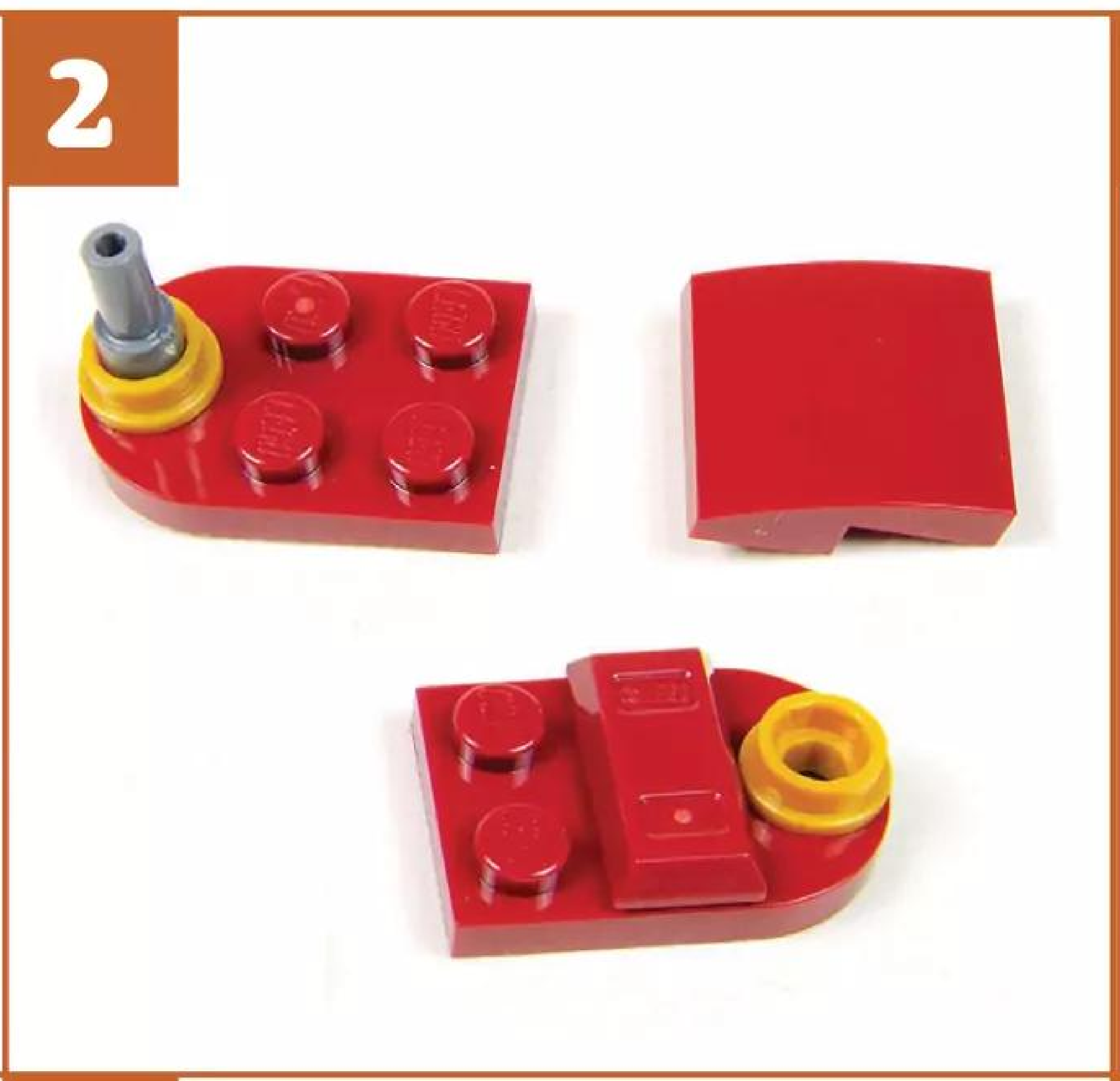

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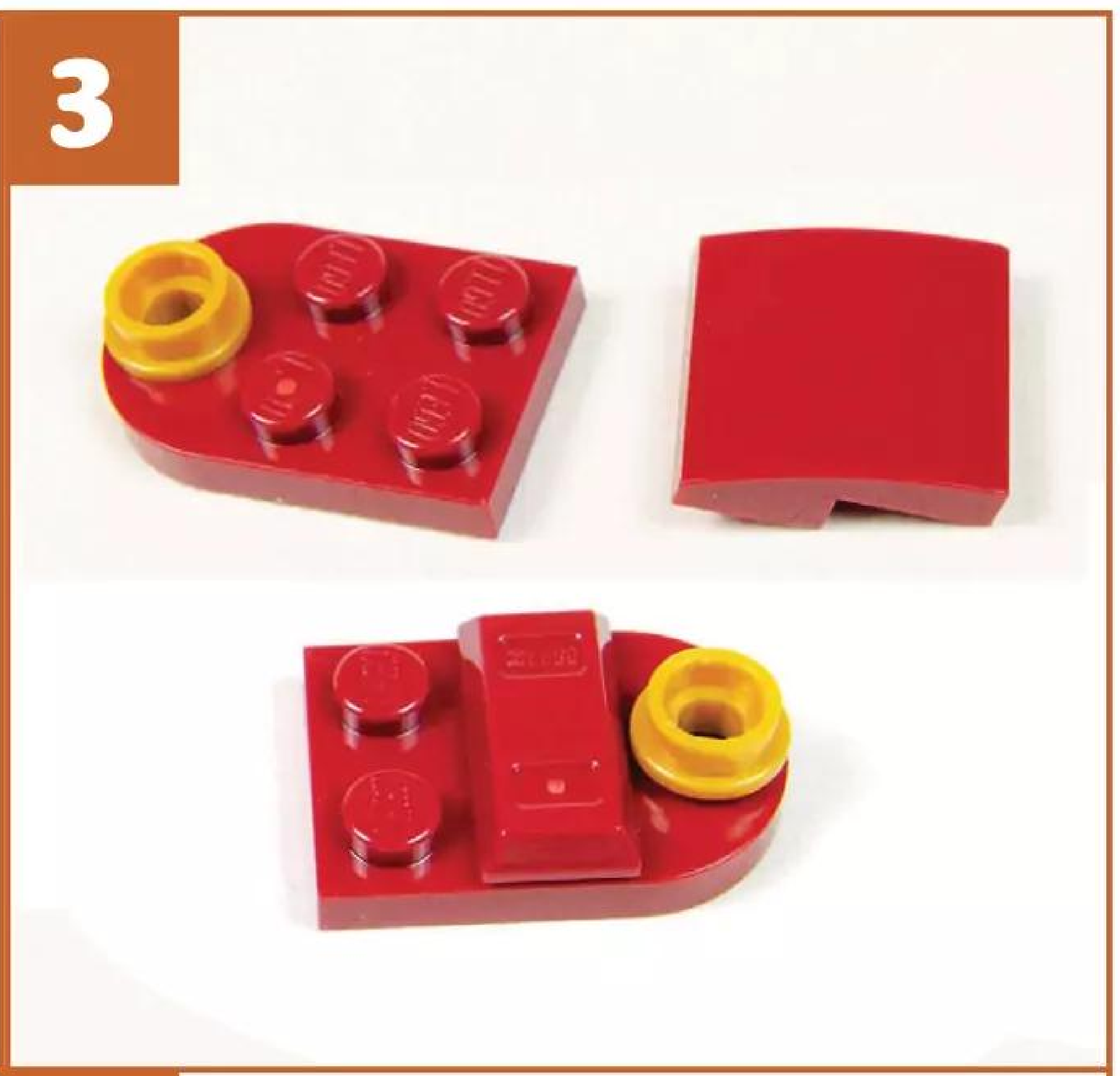

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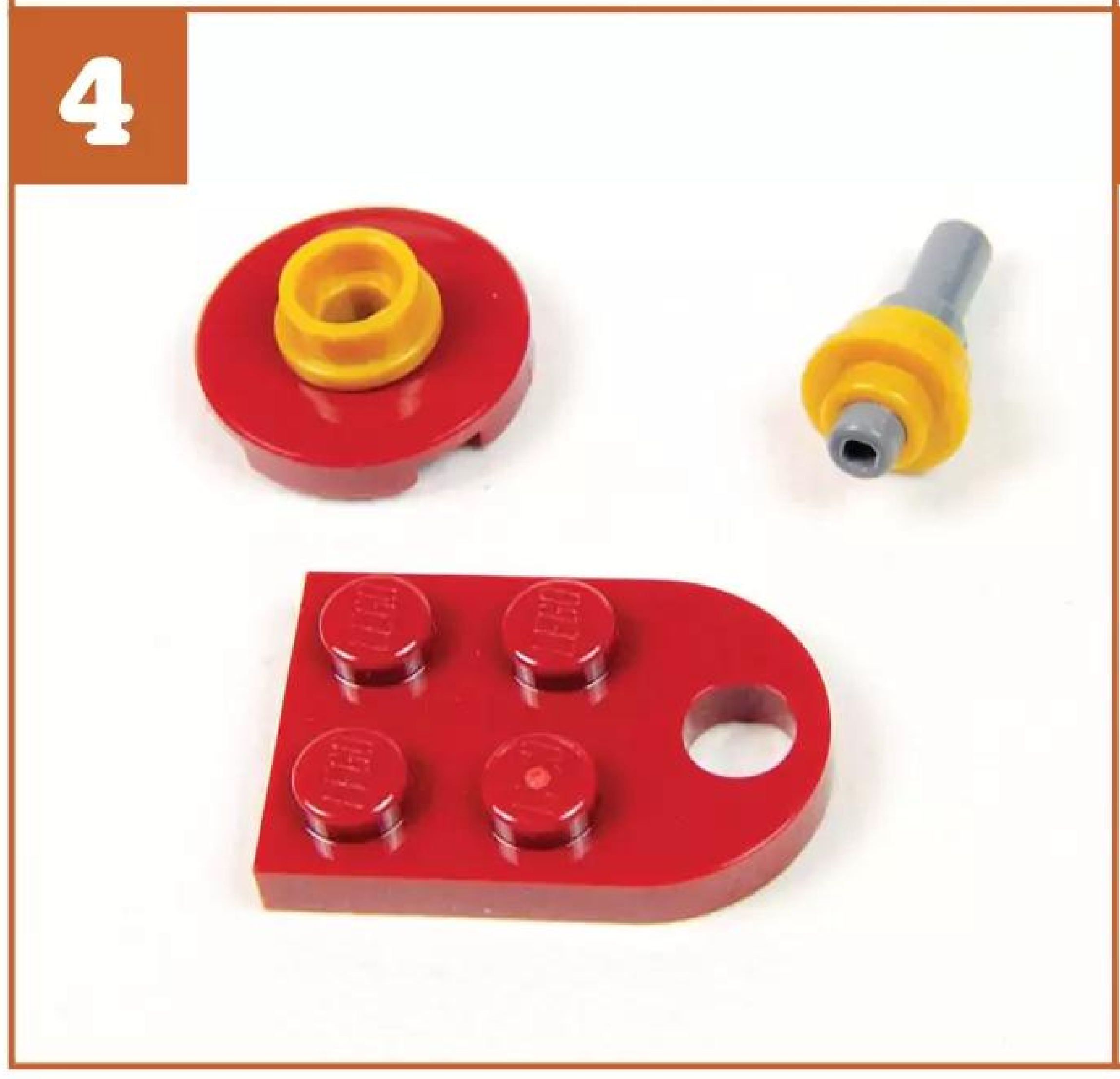

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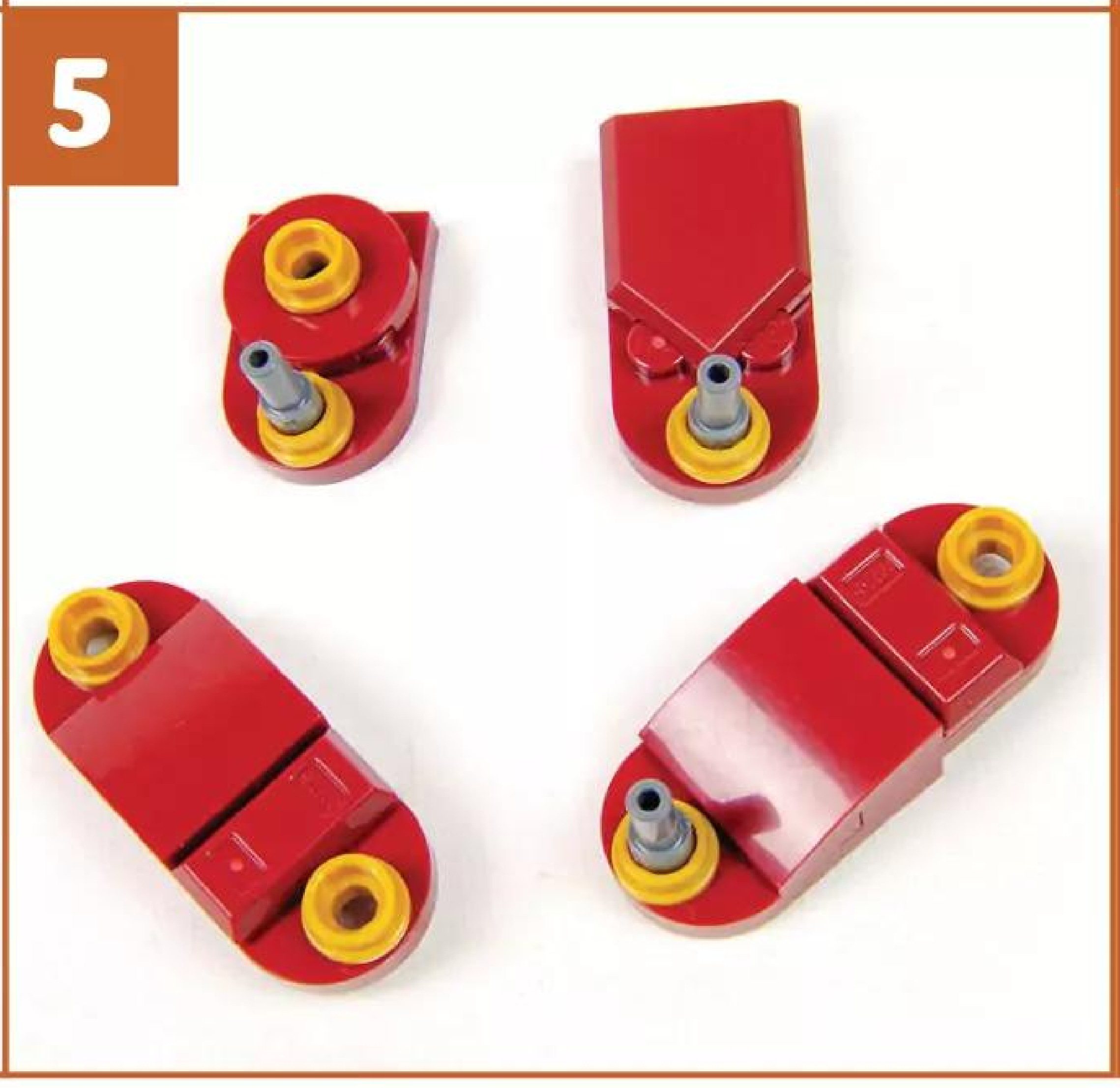

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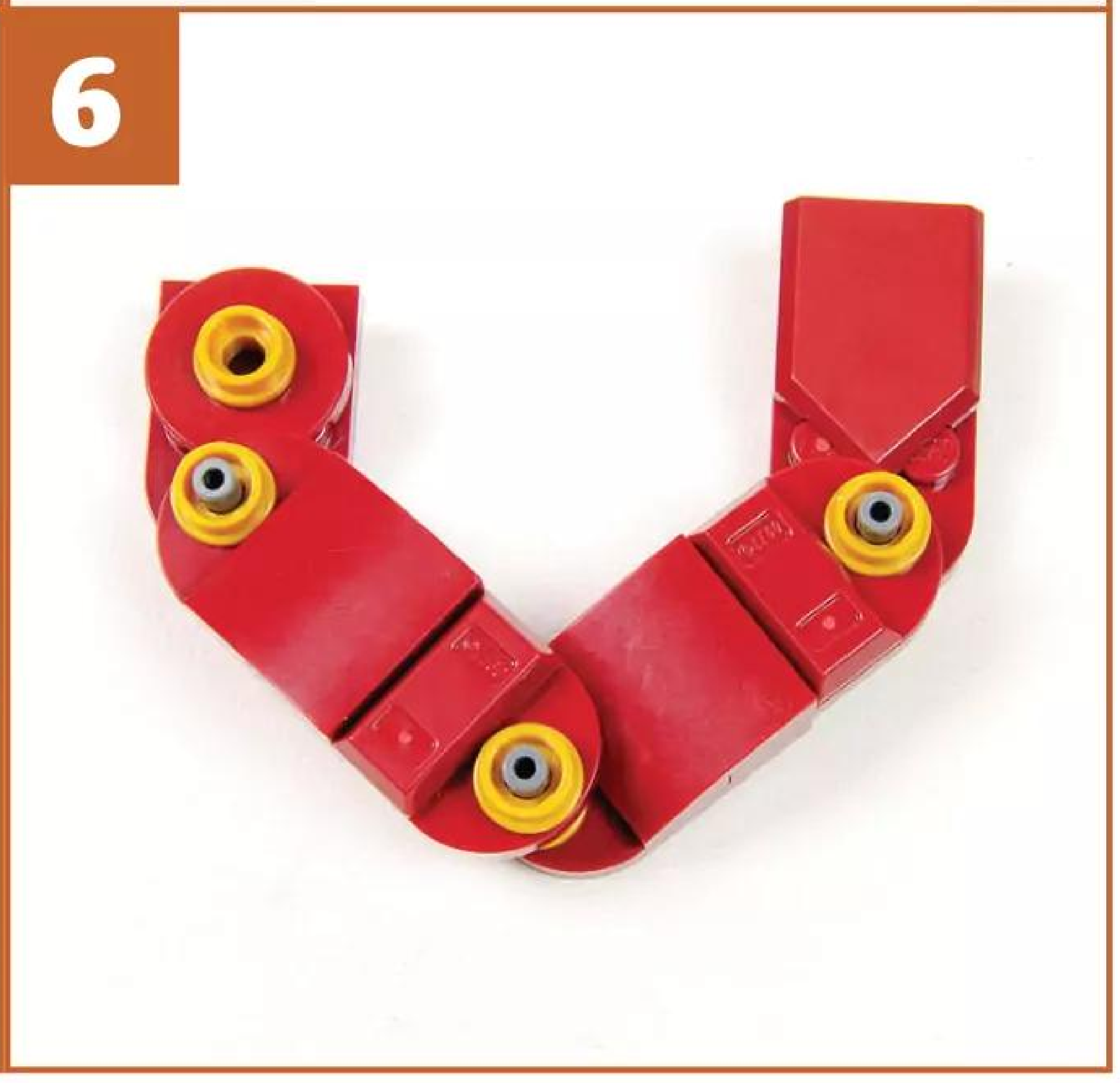

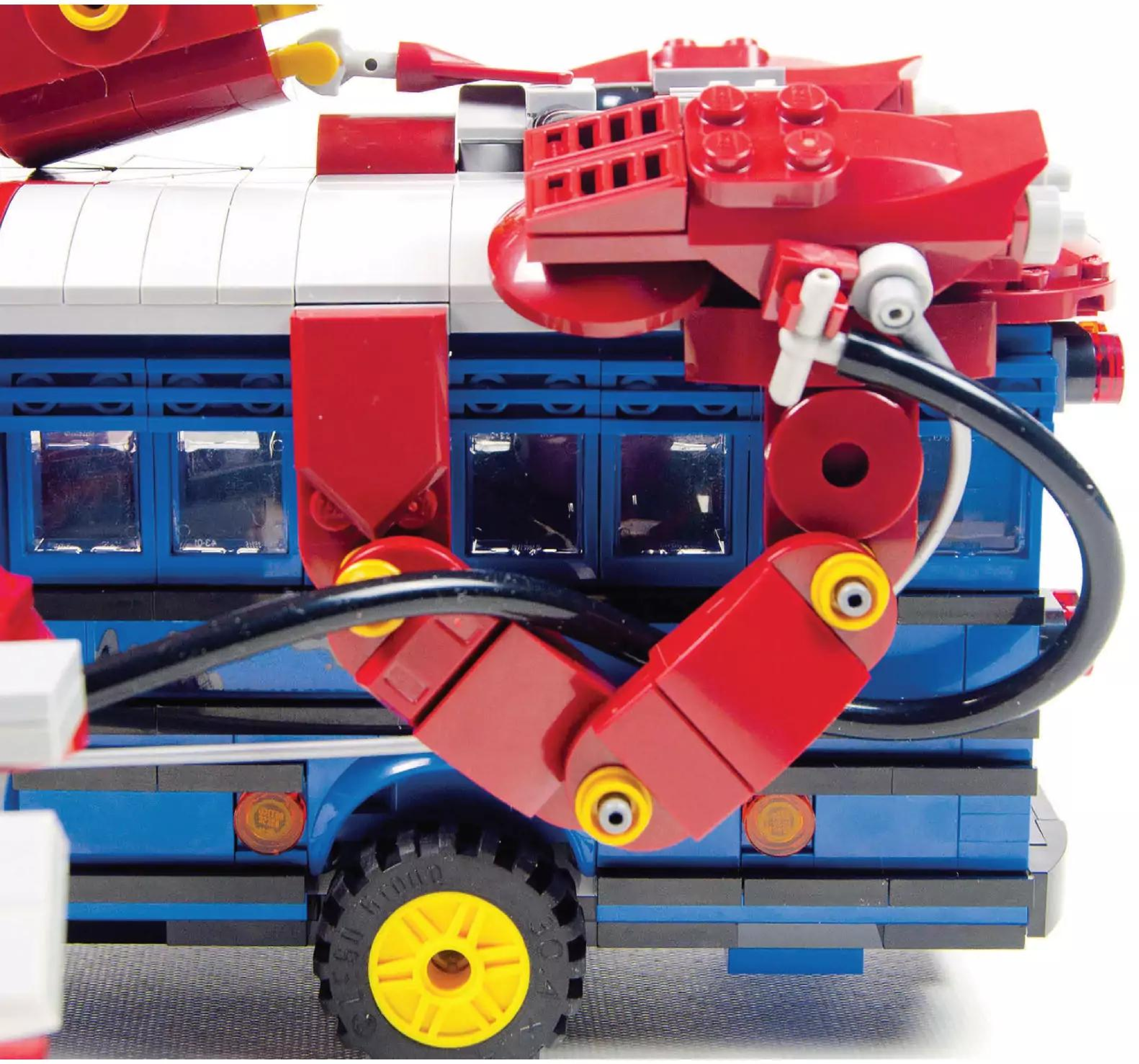

SIDE STRUCTURE

The supports that descend from the Battle Bus roof are among its most defining visual features. In the standard version, they connect the massive balloon assembly to the roof of the blue school bus body beneath. For this Stark Industries variant, those supports remain but are completely reimagined in Iron Man's metallic palette of dark red and gold.

Translating the complex angled geometry from the in-game model into LEGO form poses one of the project's biggest challenges. The angles do not align neatly with standard LEGO hinge or slope elements. The solution uses 2L bars and 1x1 round plates with holes in their studs to form a flexible frame that can capture the required bends.

The resulting structure almost feels like a Technic assembly. The contrasting layers lend the sides a distinctive look that visually ties into the Arc Reactor above. This section demonstrates how effective clever parts usage can be in achieving accuracy.

REAR ENGINES

Tony Stark always has a fondness for propulsion systems and that passion extends to the rear of the Stark Industries Battle Bus. In Fortnite, the upgraded vehicle is equipped with twin engines mounted high on the back of the bus.

At this smaller LEGO scale, capturing that detail demands creativity. The solution comes from a specialised element first designed for NINJAGO mechs, featuring angular shaping and built-in vents that make it ideal for compact engine builds.

Each engine is mounted on a bar and clip connection, allowing them to pivot slightly and match the tilt of the roof with no gaps. On the opposite side of the bus from the door, the in-game model includes clusters of cables and wiring, a common feature of Stark tech.

This build recreates that area with lengths of LEGO hose elements that snake out from one of the engines, adding realism and a nice visual contrast to the angled nature of the build with the curves of the hoses.

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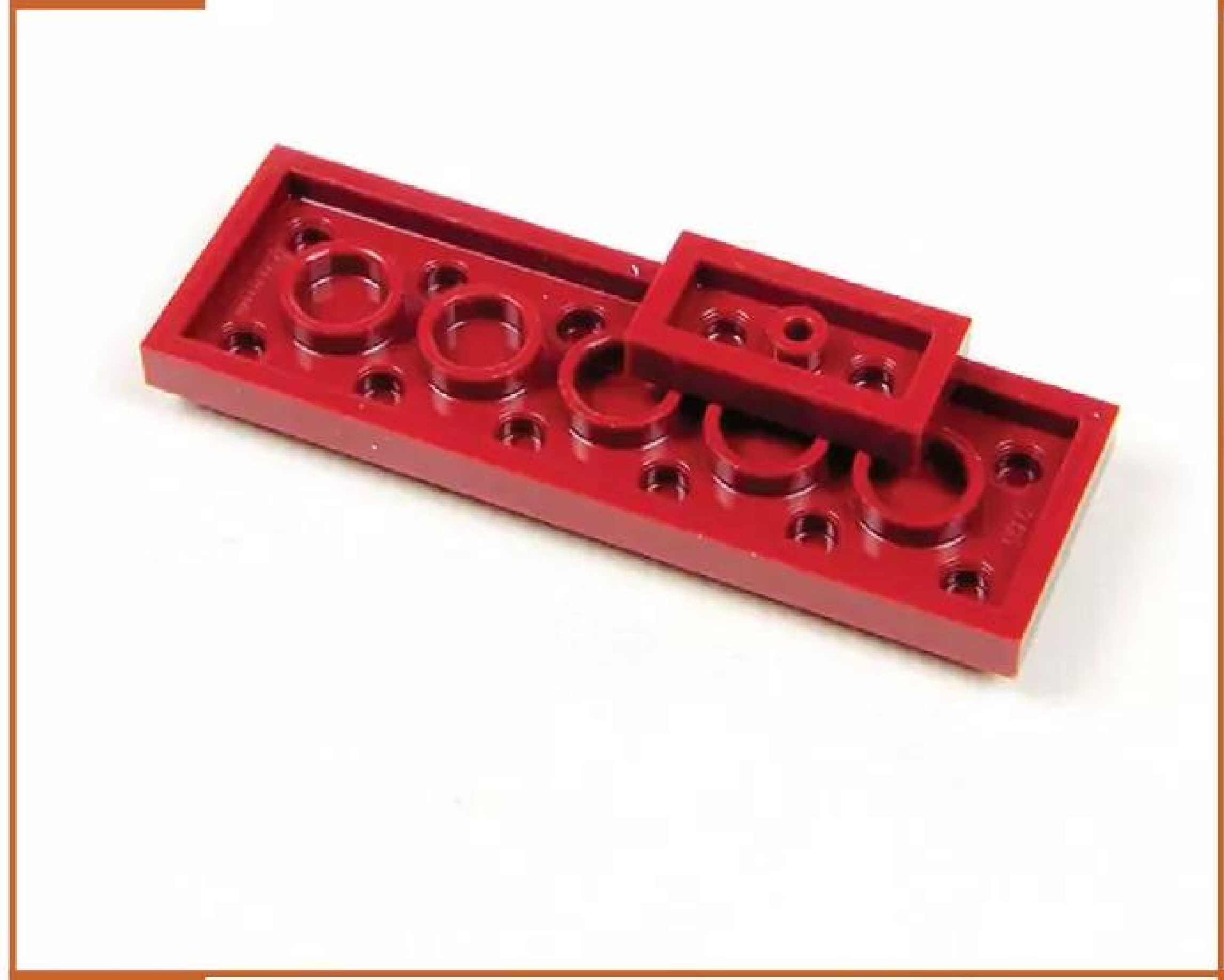

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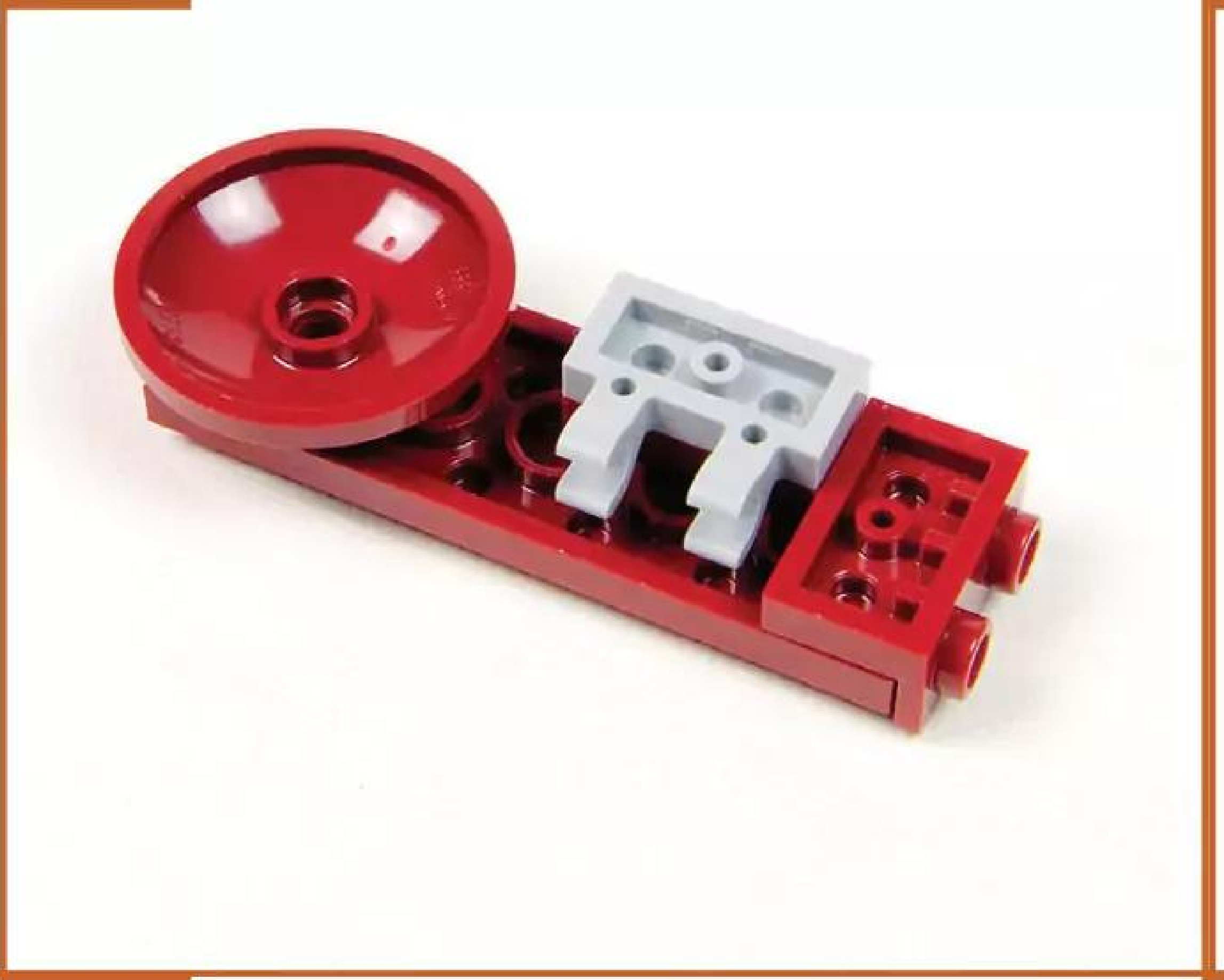

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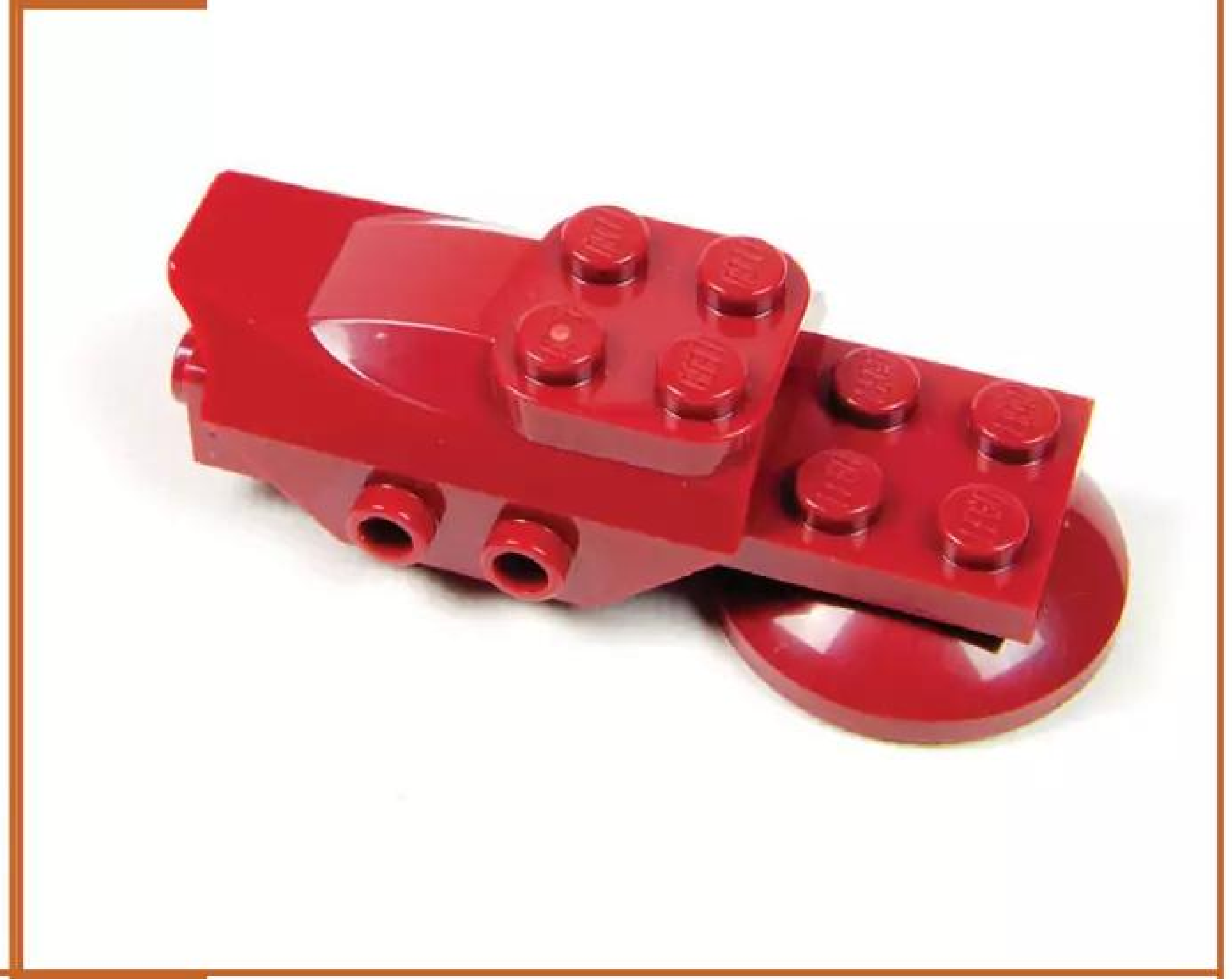

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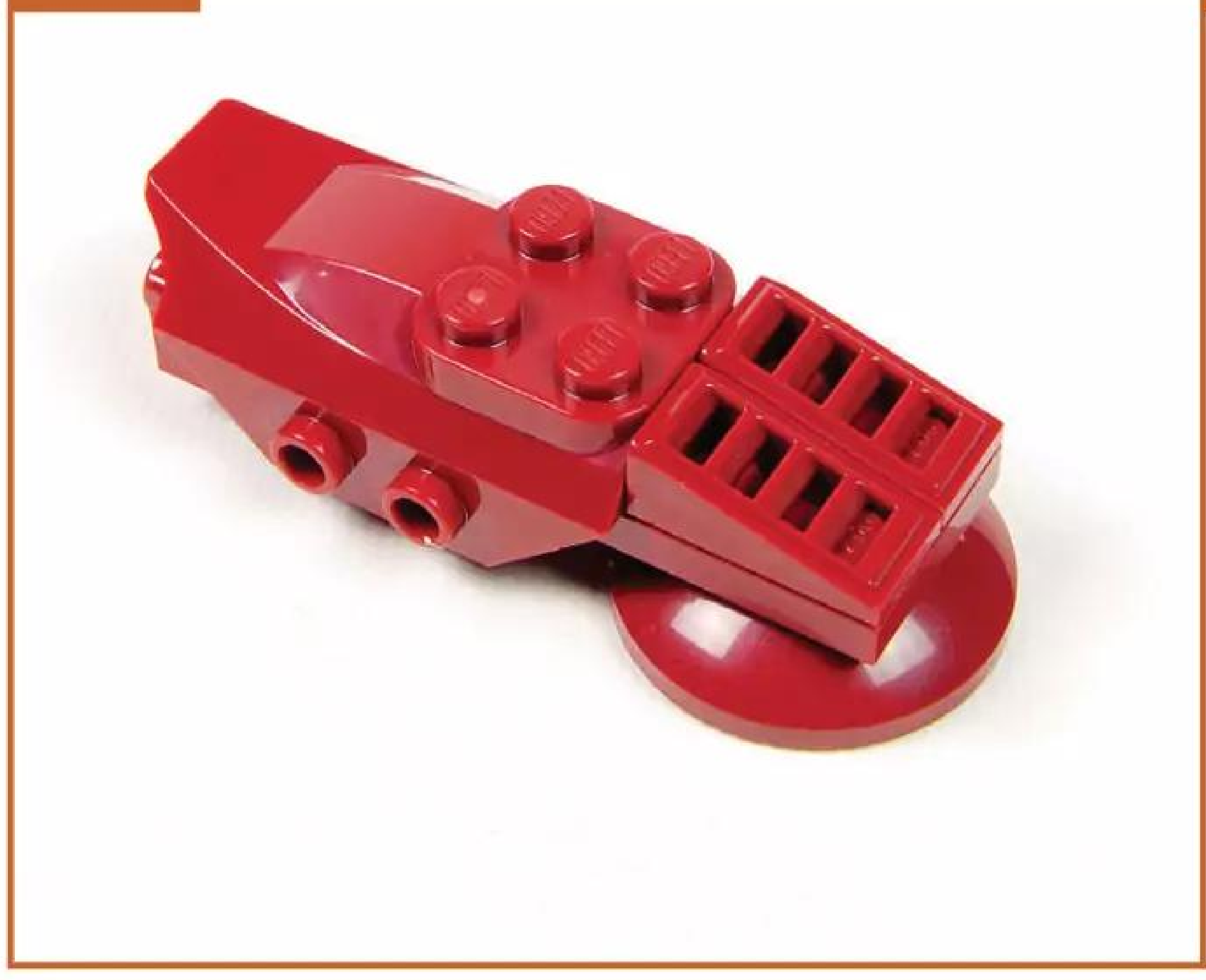

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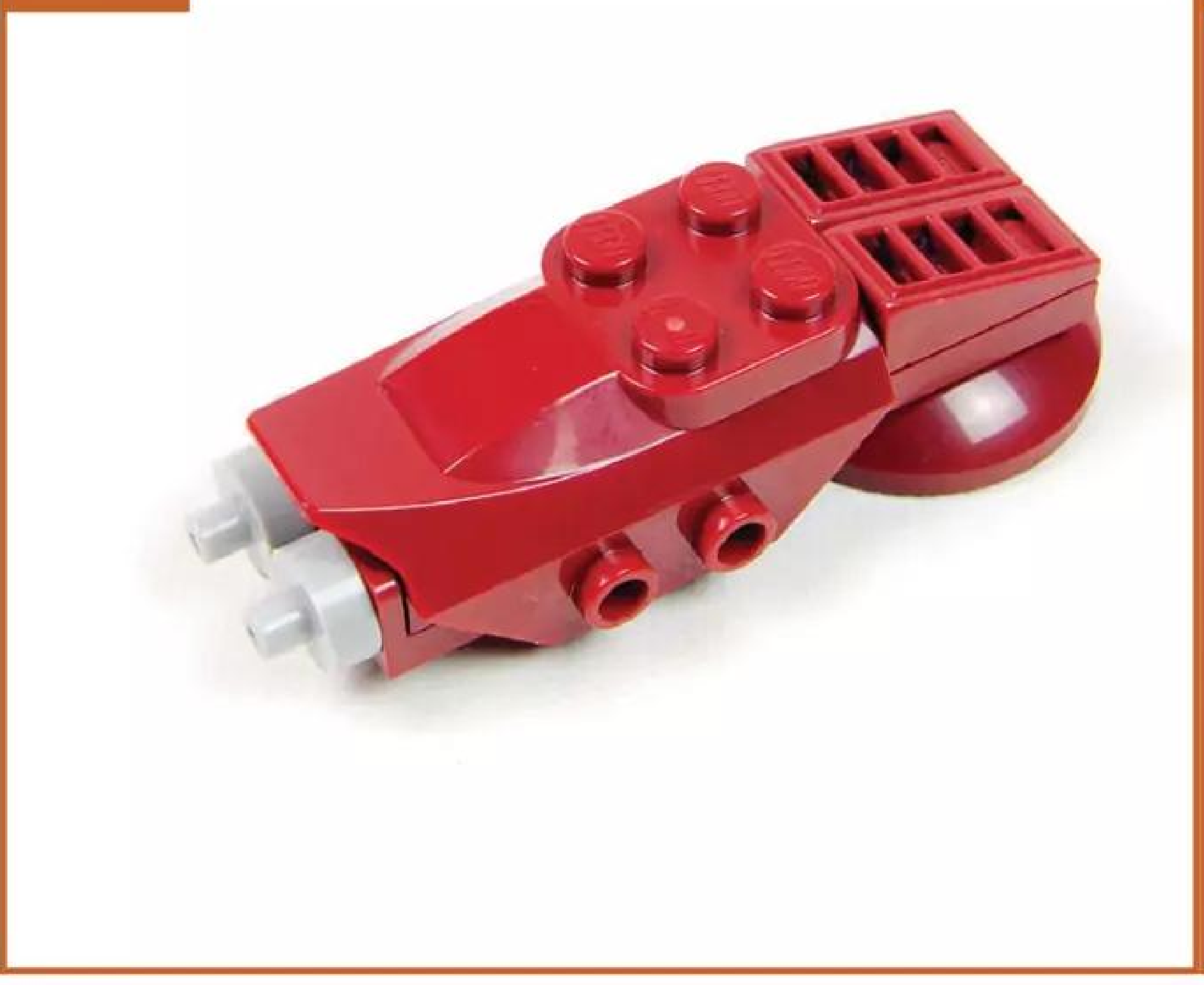

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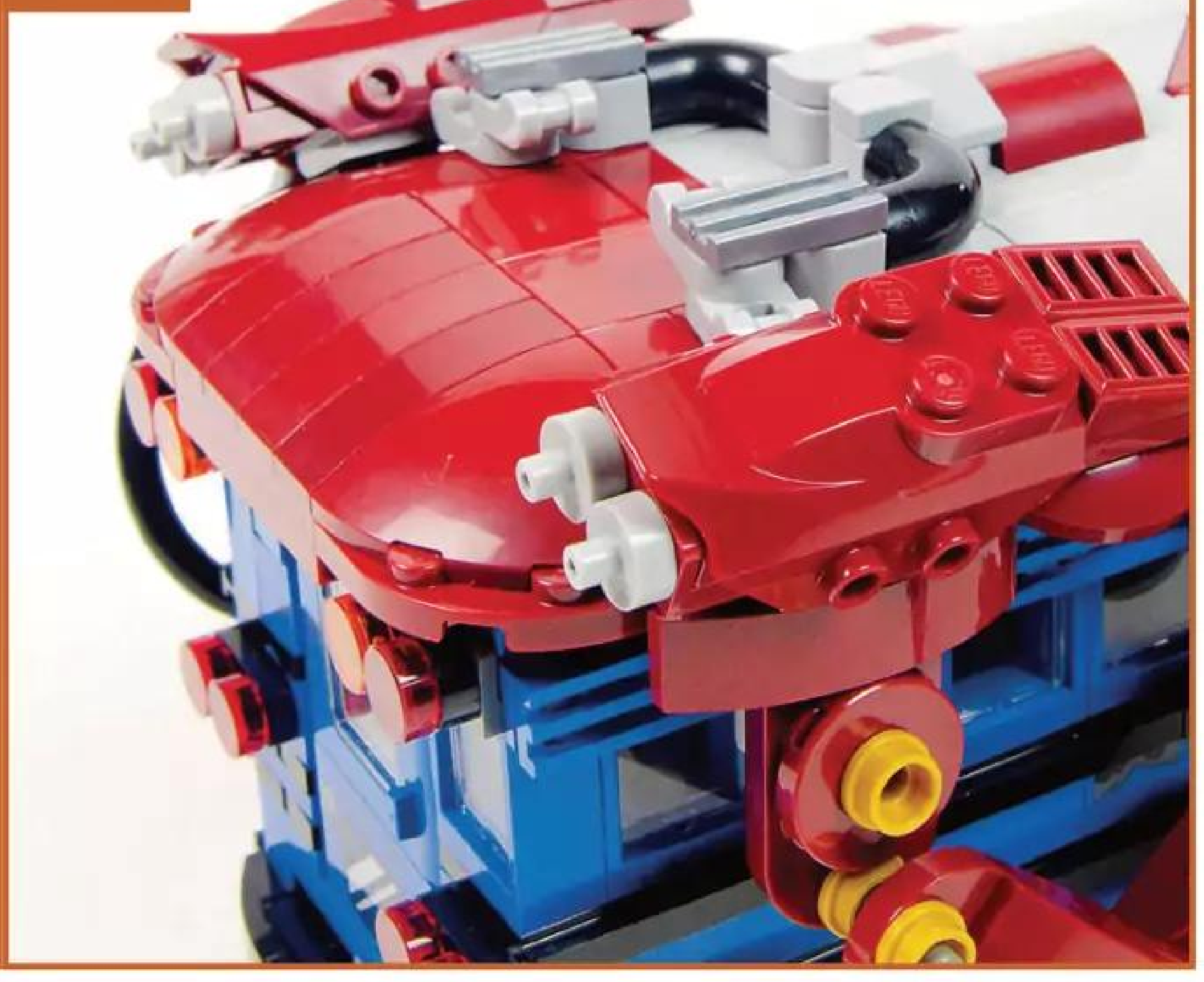

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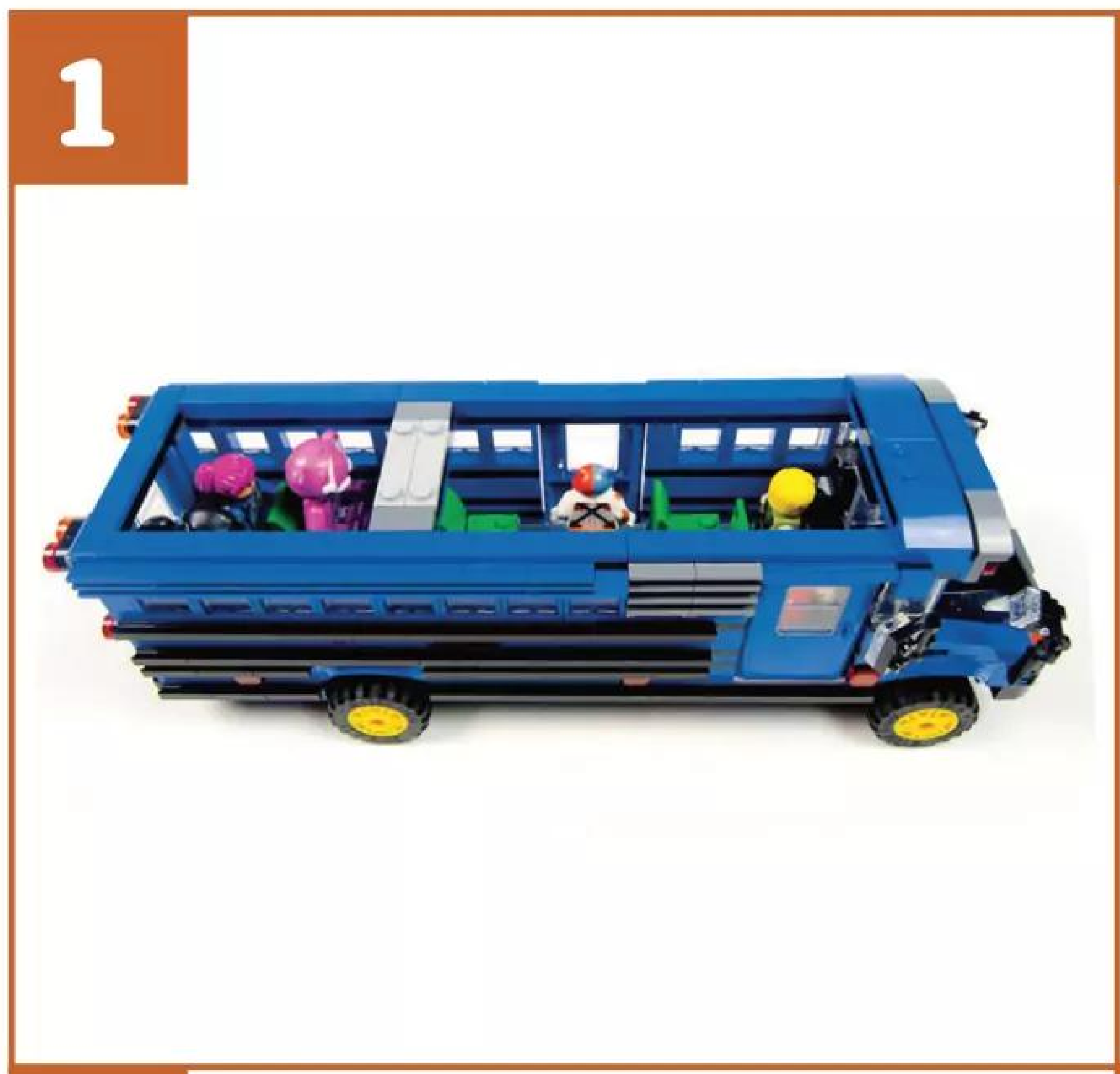

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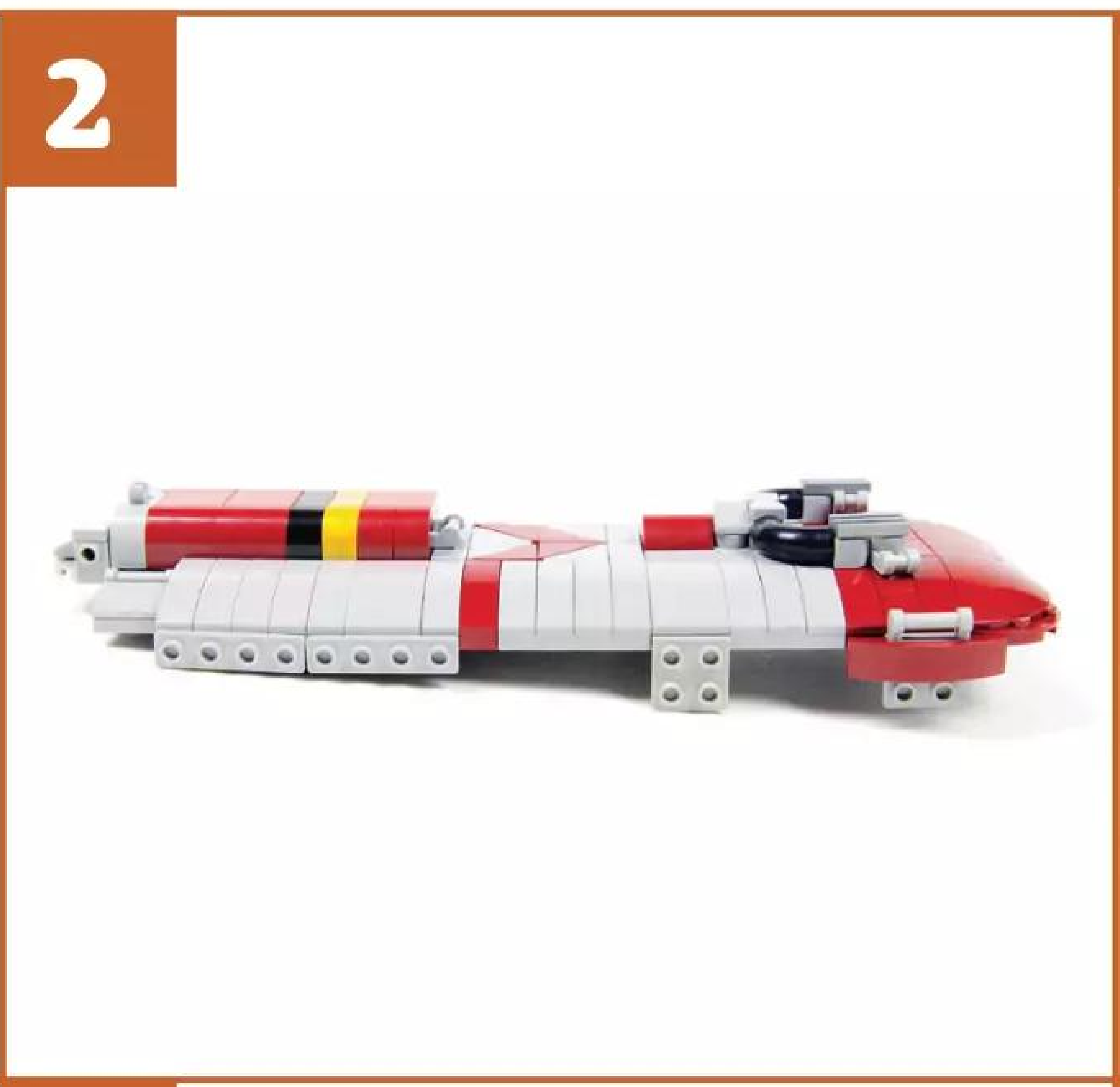

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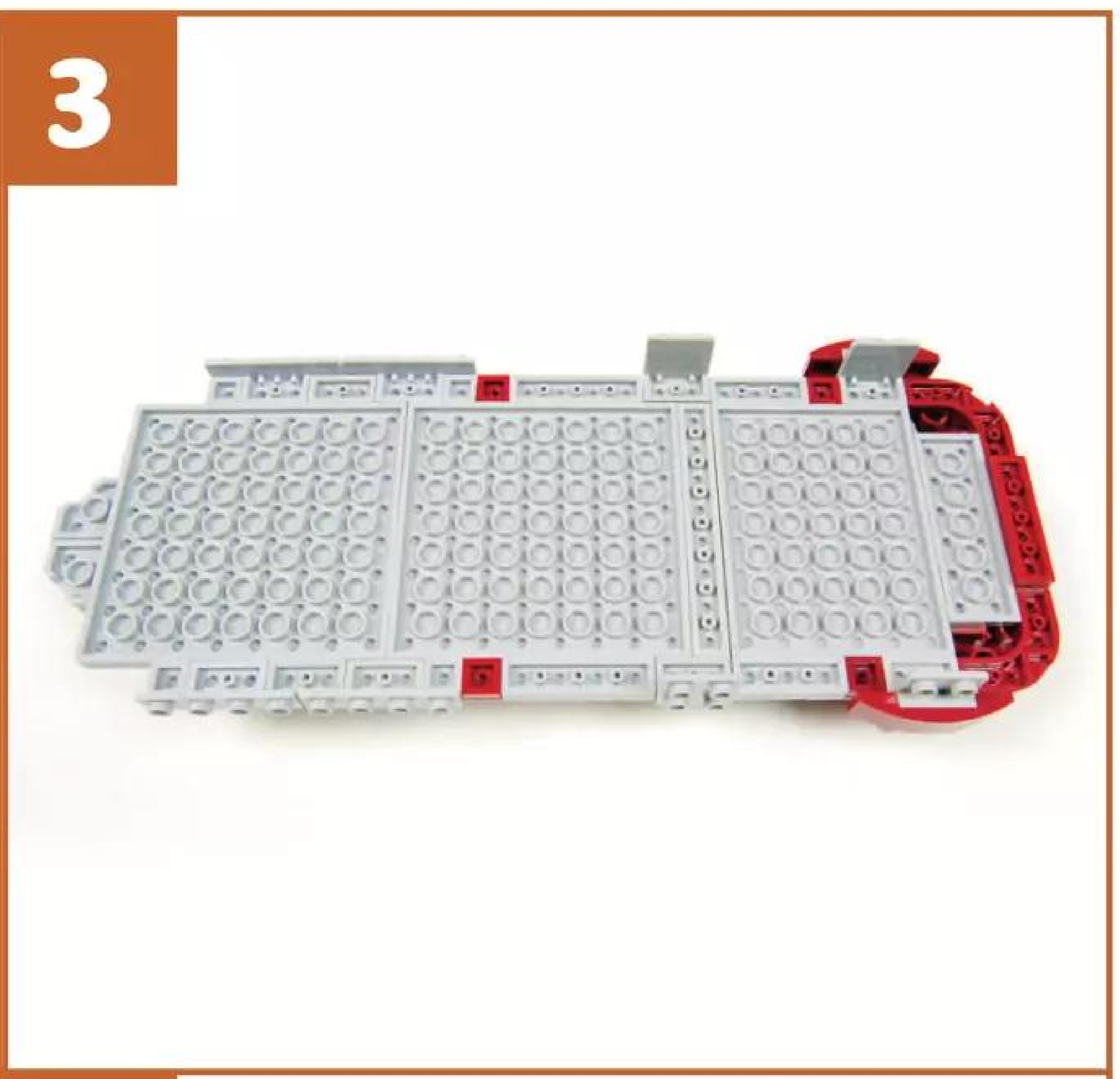

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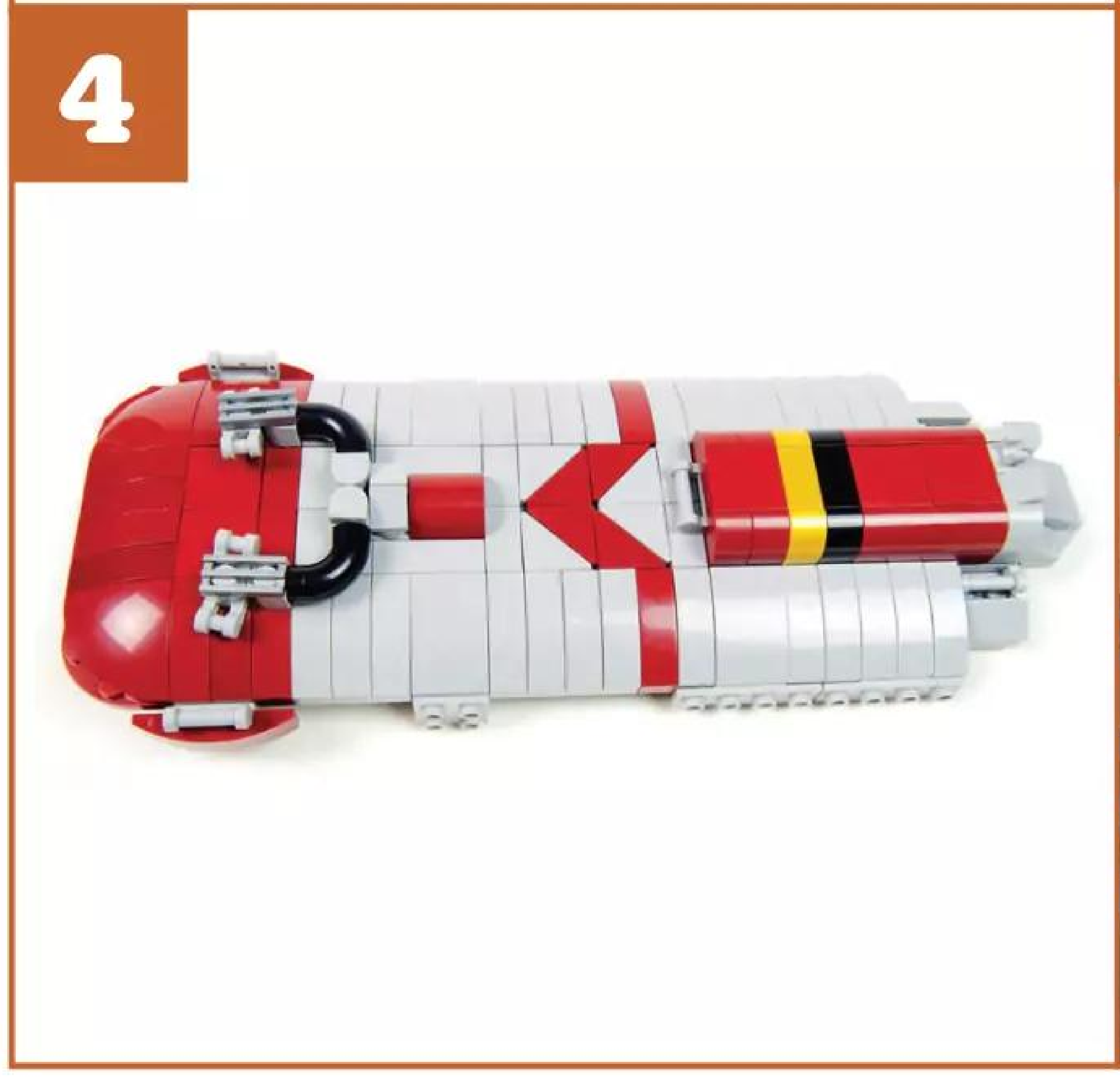

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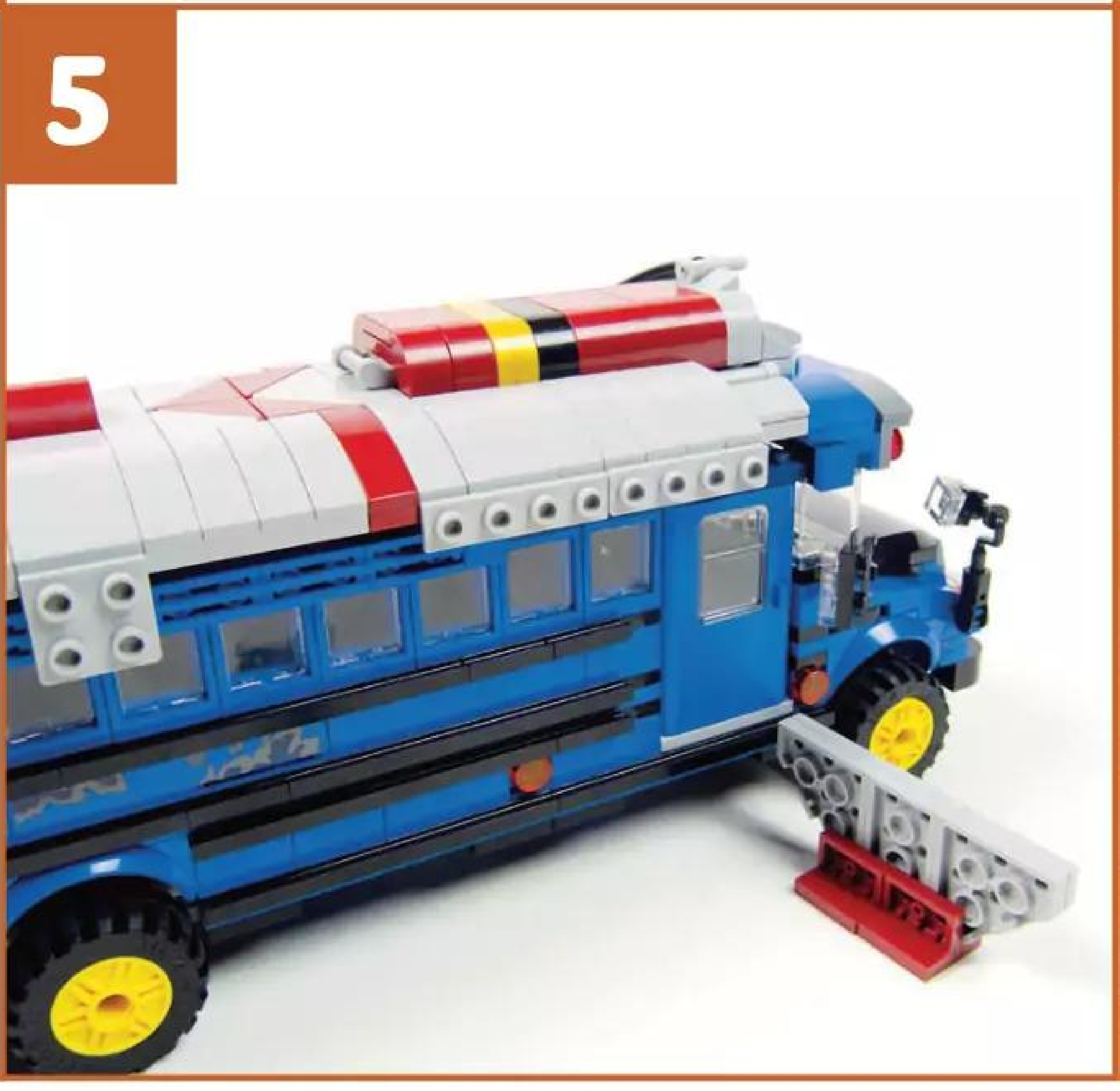

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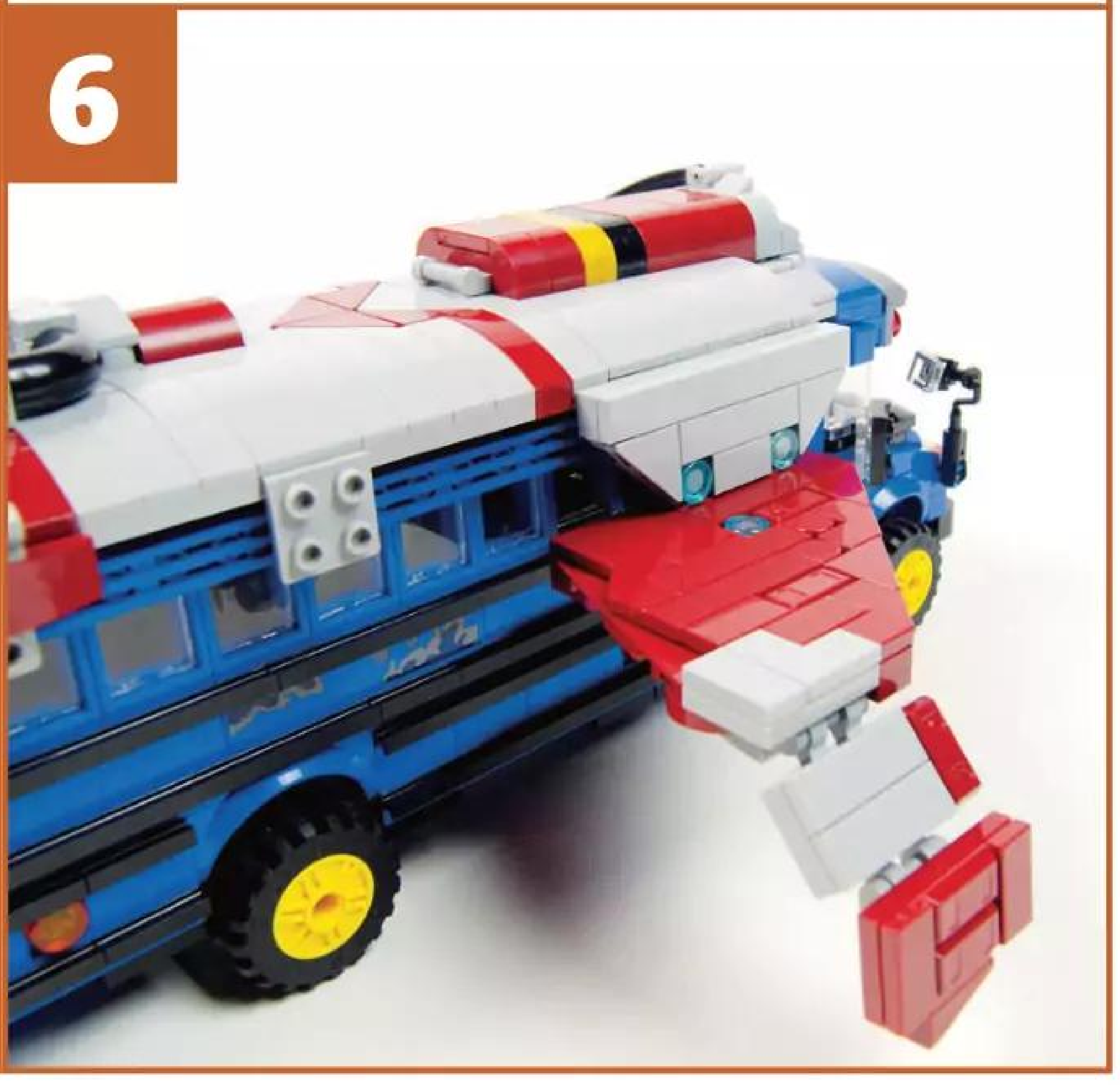


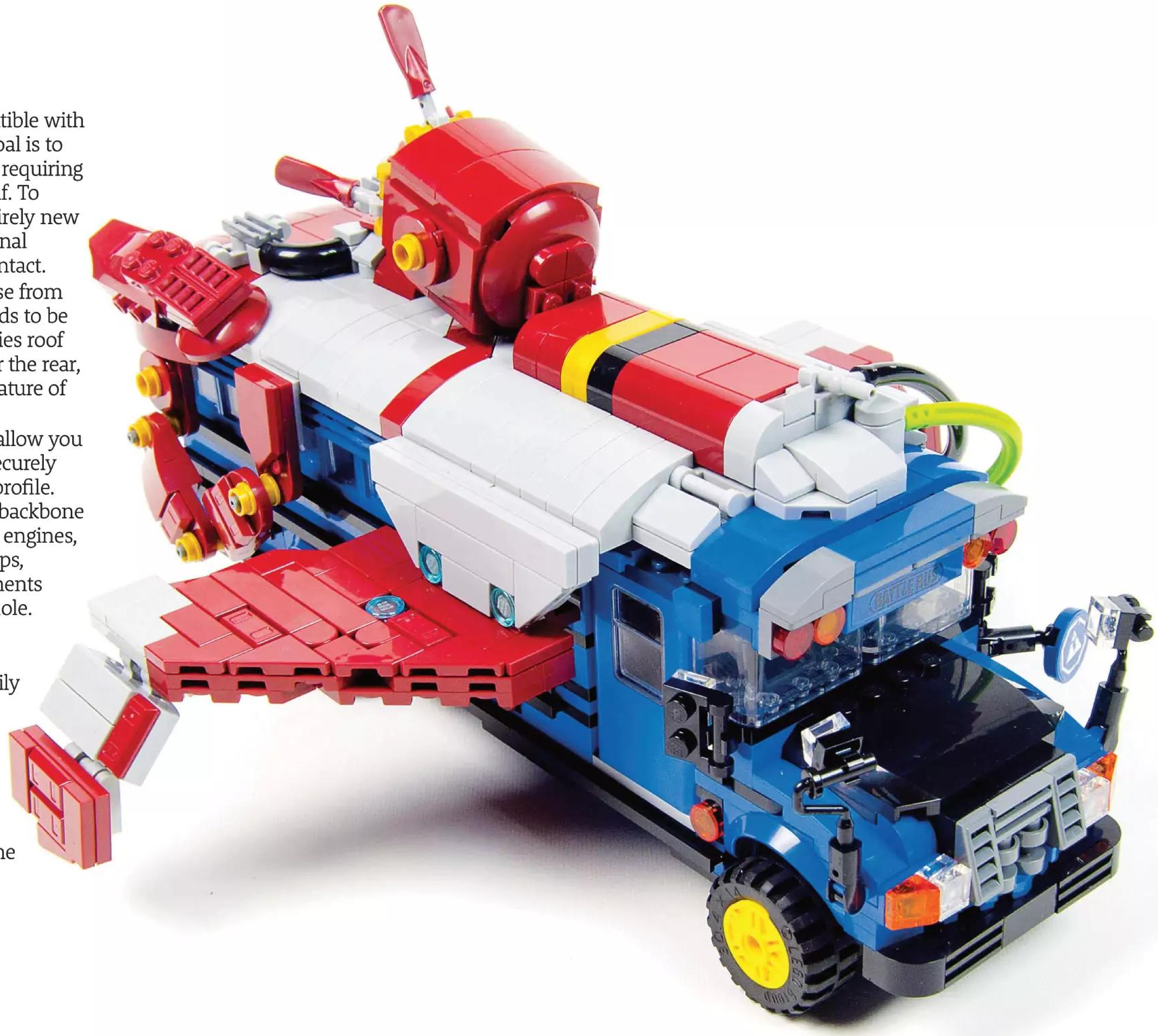
ROOF ASSEMBLY

This project is full compatible with the official LEGO set. The goal is to attach the upgrade without requiring any changes to the bus itself. To achieve this, there is an entirely new roof assembly and the original connection points remain intact.

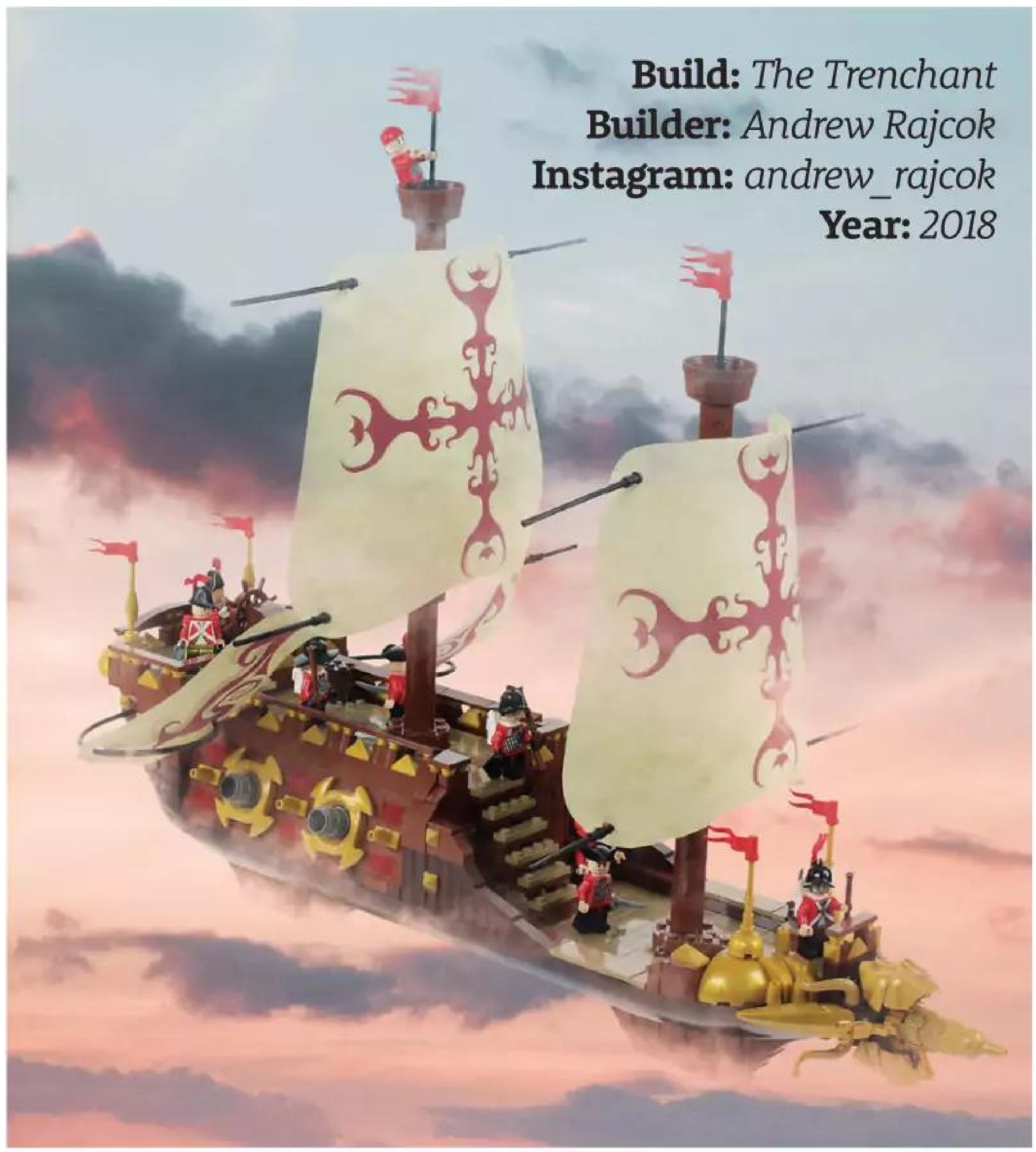
Only the front yellow hose from the standard Battle Bus needs to be removed. The Stark Industries roof extends slightly farther over the rear, echoing the over-the-top nature of Iron Man's aesthetic.

Brackets along the sides allow you to add wings that anchor securely while maintaining a clean profile. The new roof serves as the backbone for the Arc Reactor and rear engines, as both attach to it using clips, tying all of the custom elements together into a cohesive whole.

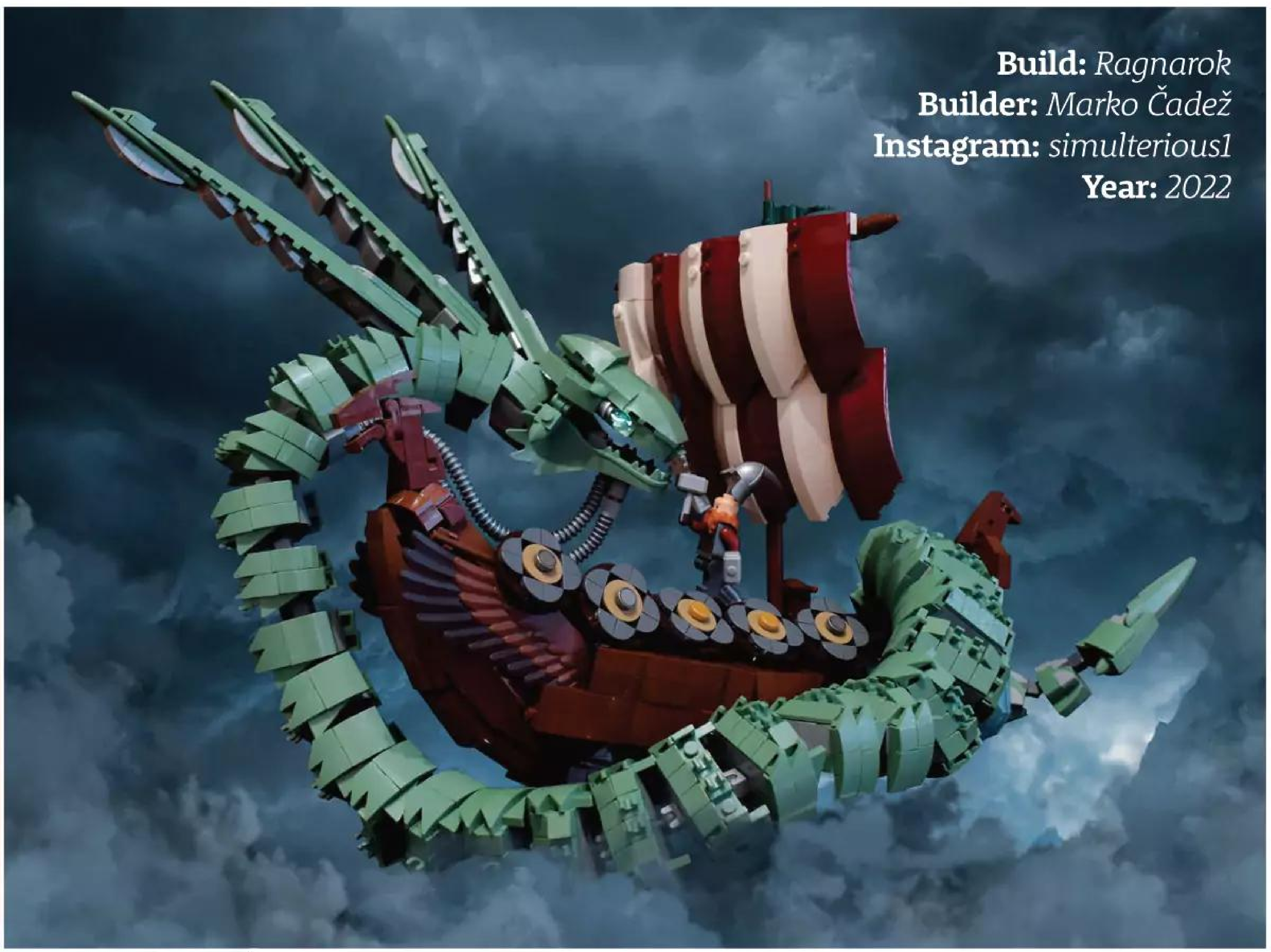
This approach ensures the model can be built as a self-contained module, easily attached or removed from the main bus, making it an ideal option for both display and play – after all, when you are mashing up Marvel and Fortnite, it would be a shame if it wasn't playable. ■



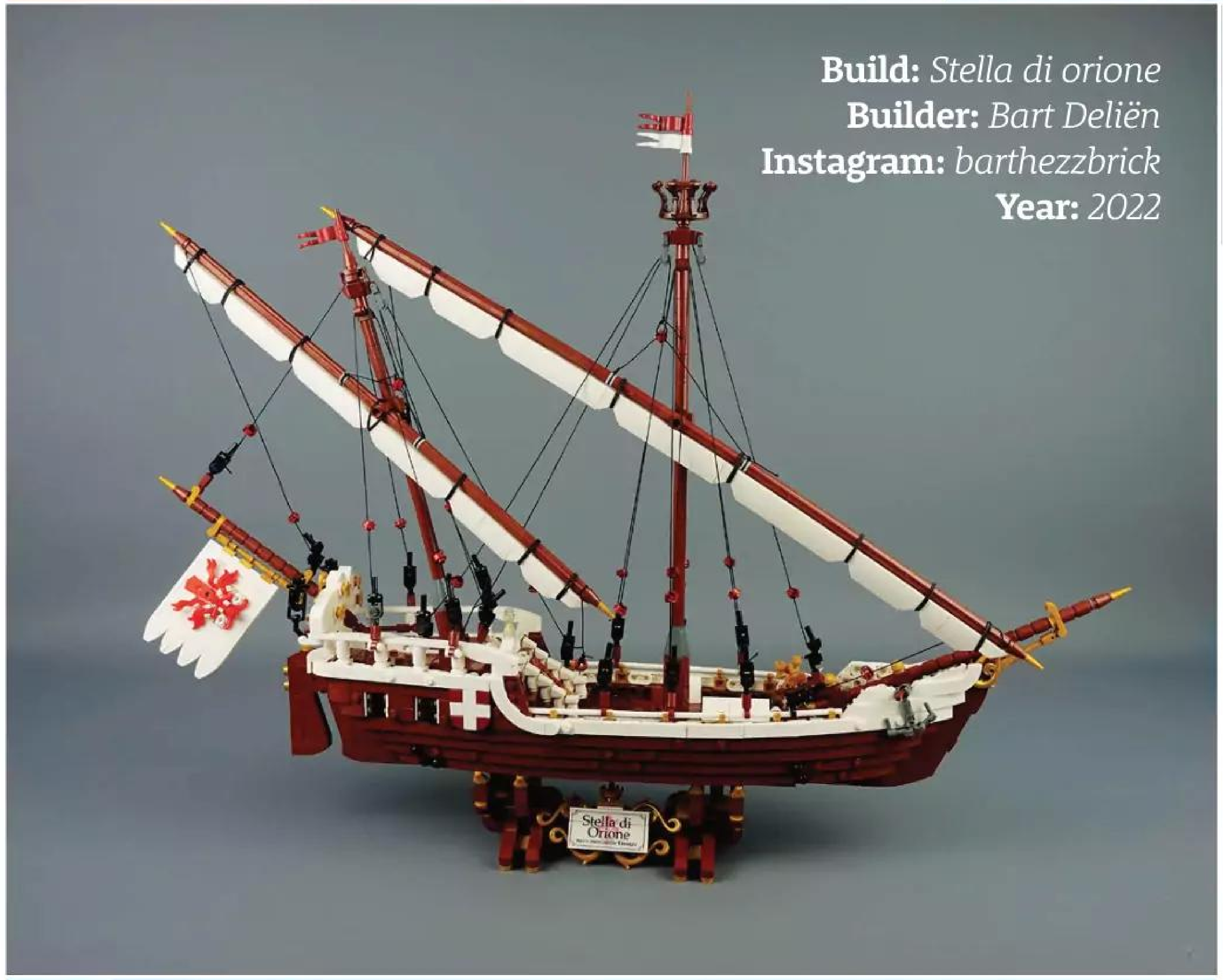
BOATS AND SHIPS



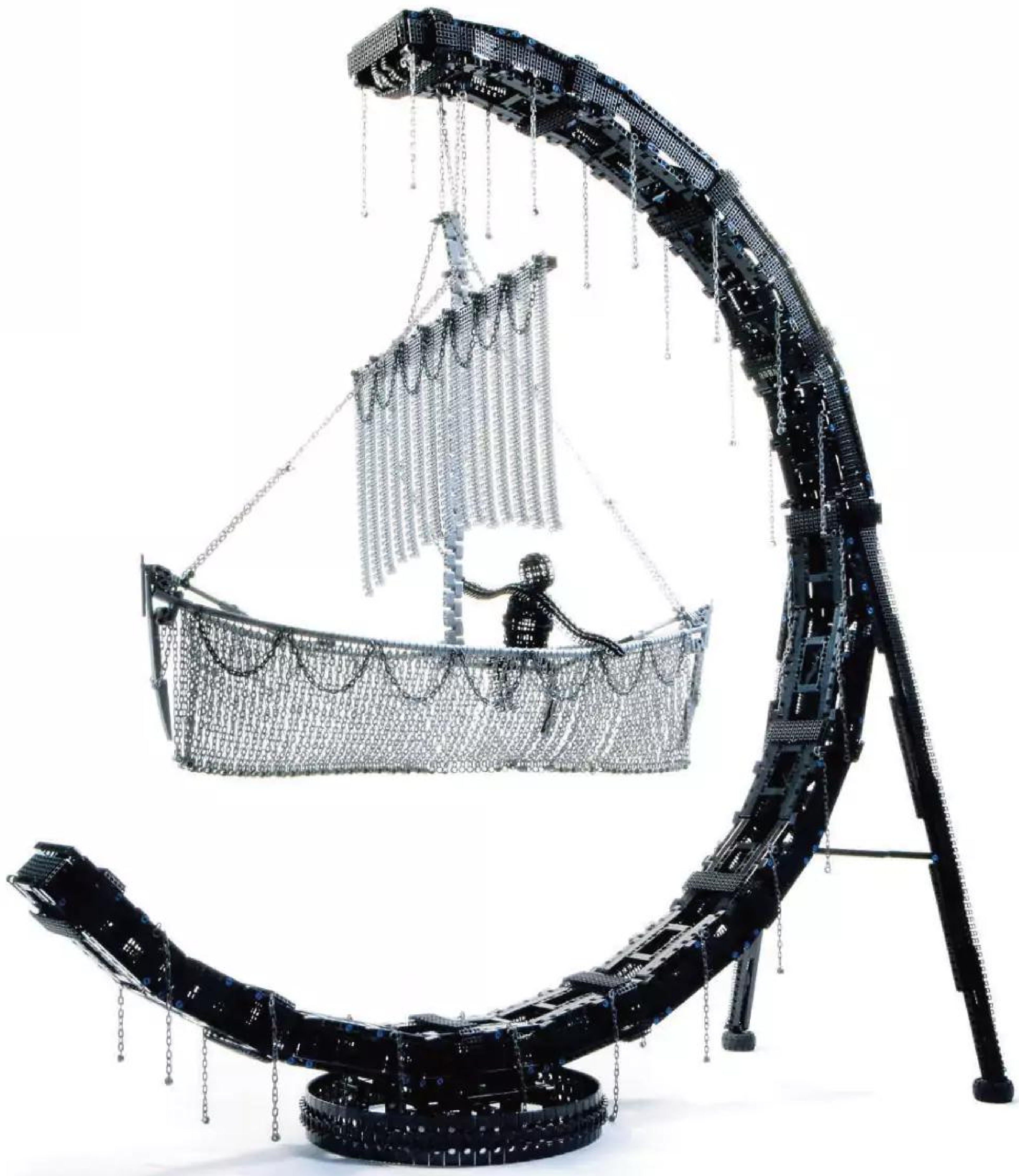
Build: *The Trenchant*
Builder: *Andrew Rajcok*
Instagram: *andrew_rajcok*
Year: *2018*



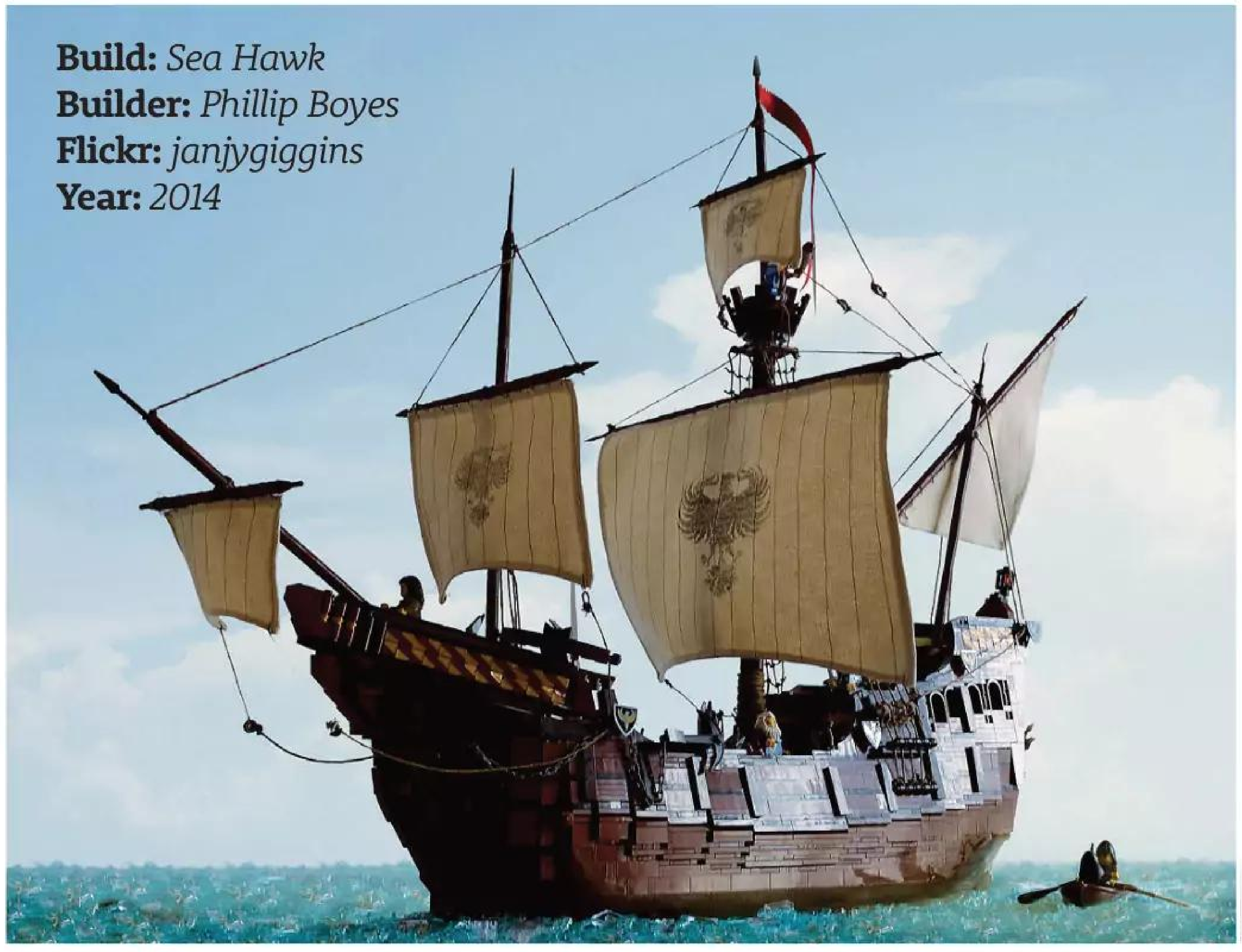
Build: *Ragnarok*
Builder: *Marko Čadež*
Instagram: *simulterious1*
Year: *2022*



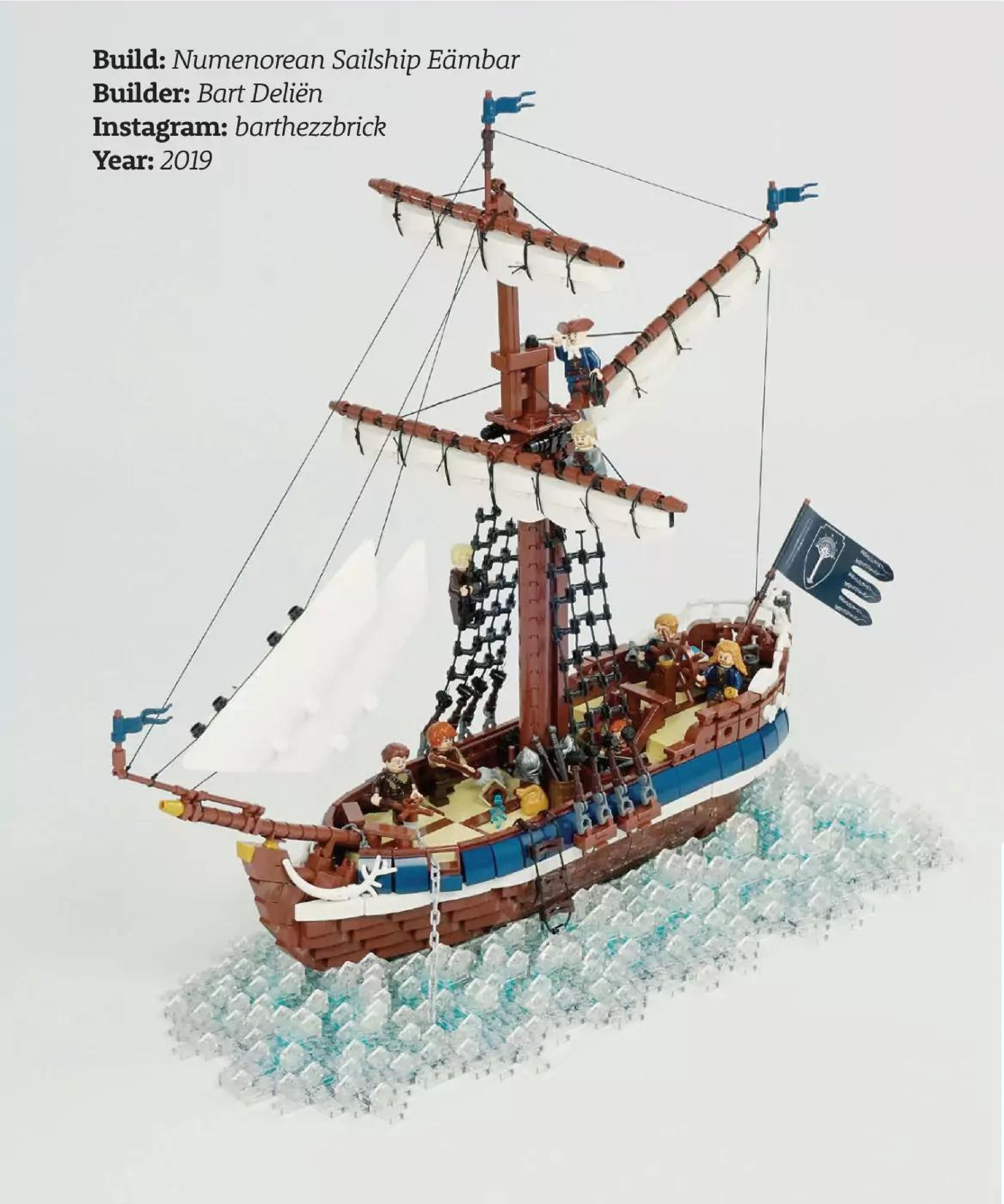
Build: *Stella di orione*
Builder: *Bart Deliën*
Instagram: *barthezzbrick*
Year: *2022*



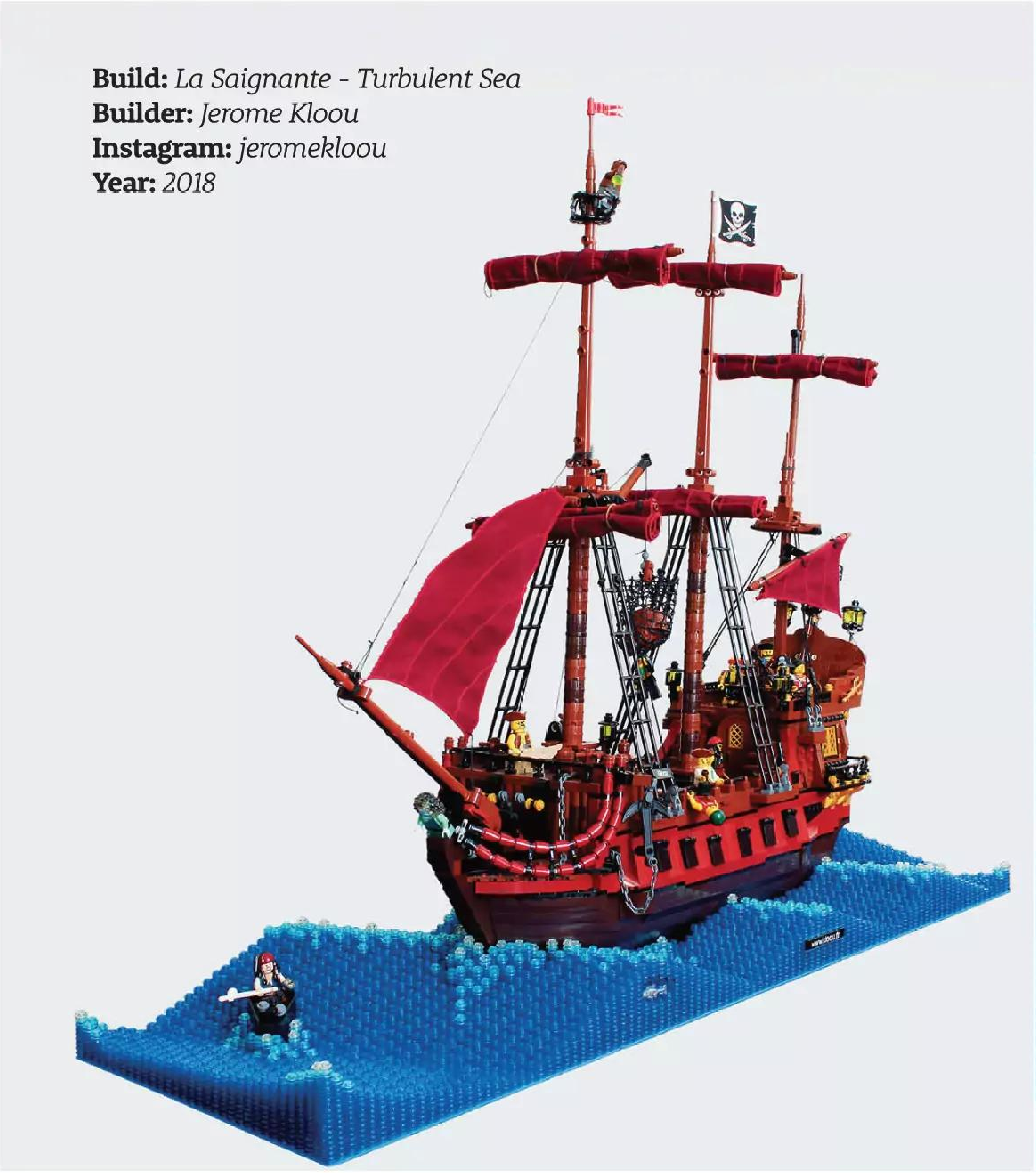
Build: *Chain Boat*
Builder: *Aido Kessler Kramm*
Instagram: *aidokay*
Year: *2024*



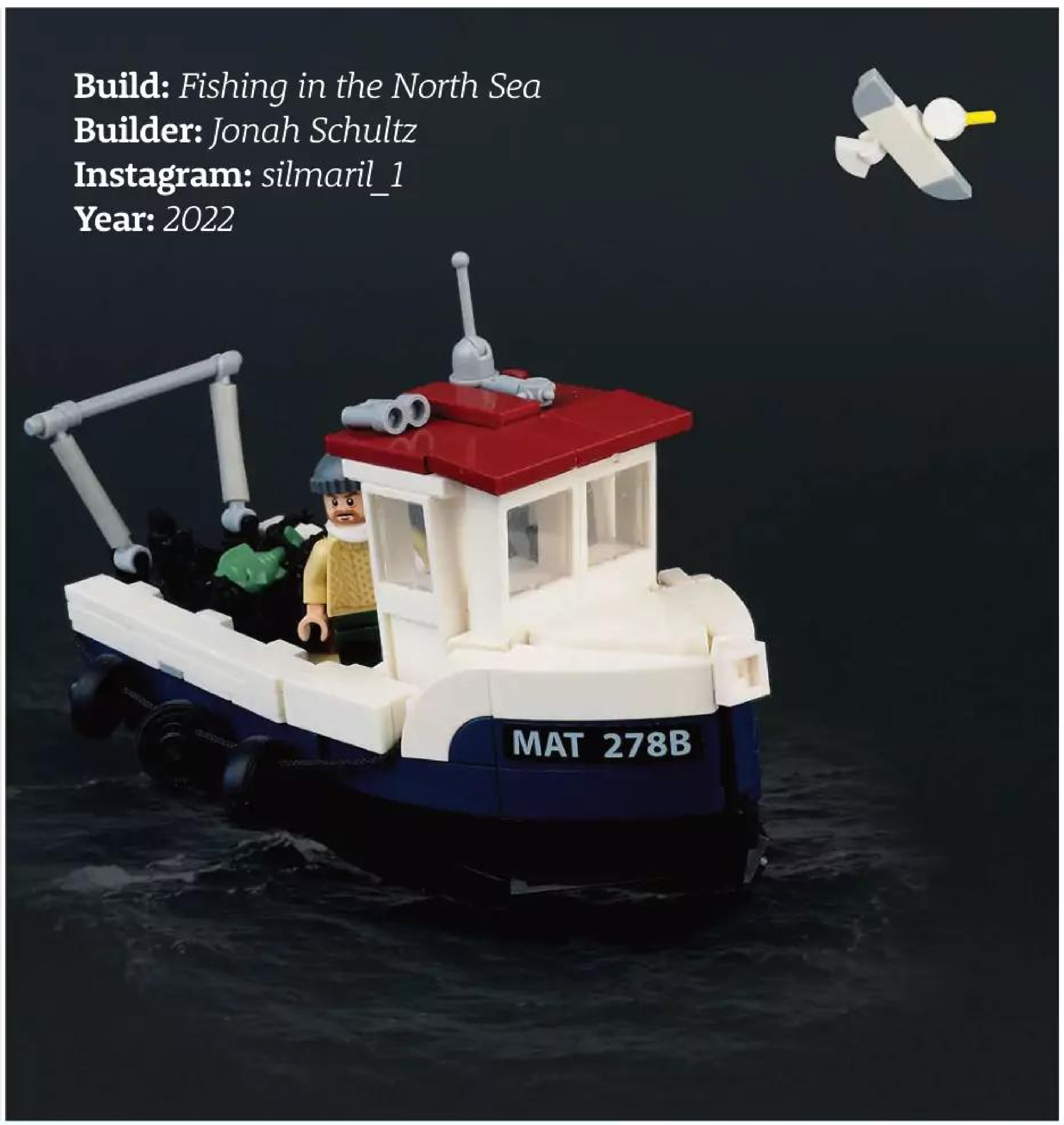
Build: *Sea Hawk*
Builder: *Phillip Boyes*
Flickr: *janjygiggins*
Year: *2014*



Build: *Numenorean Sailship Eämbar*
Builder: *Bart Deliën*
Instagram: *barthezzbrick*
Year: *2019*



Build: *La Saignante - Turbulent Sea*
Builder: *Jerome Kloou*
Instagram: *jeromekloou*
Year: *2018*



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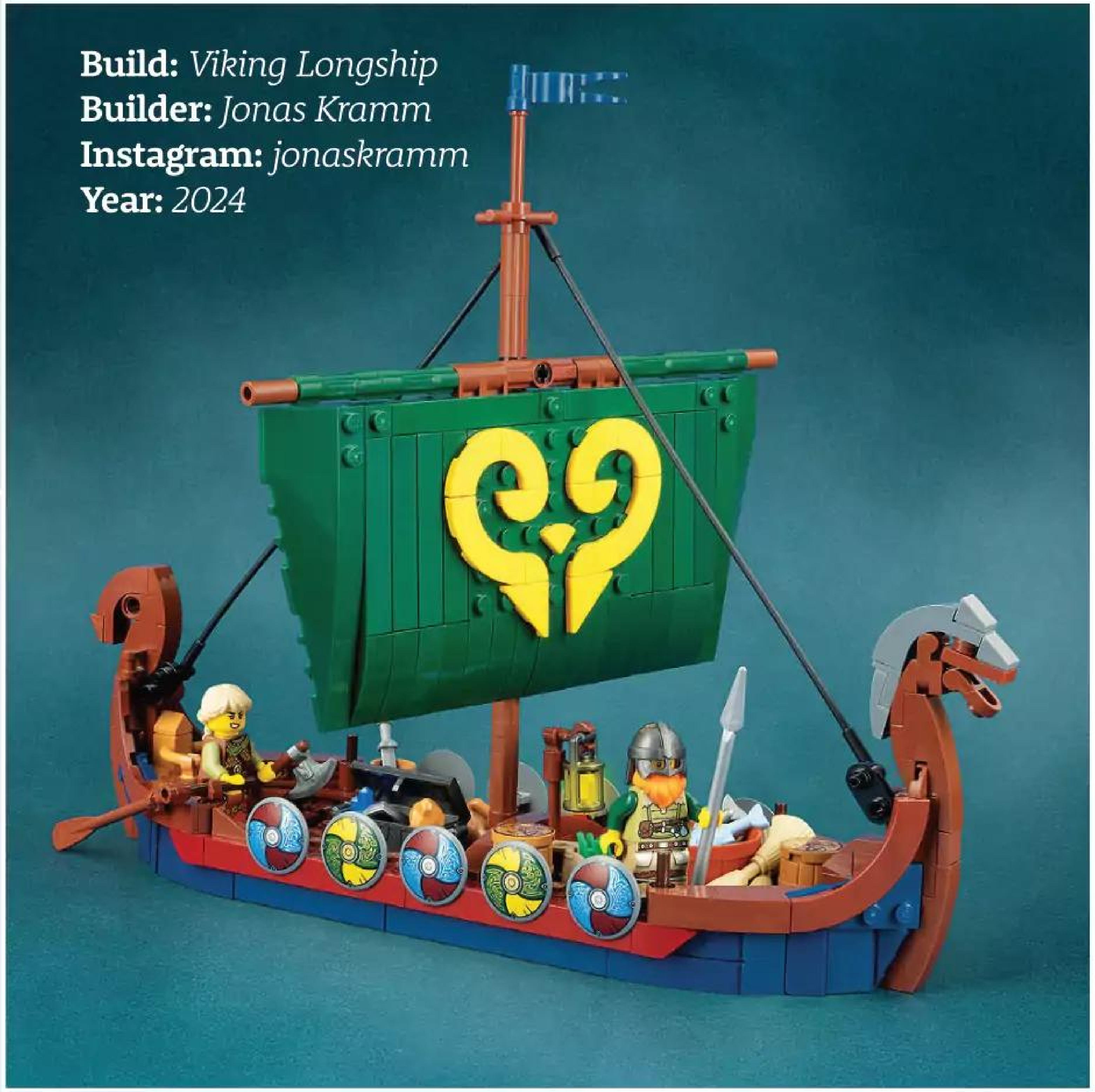
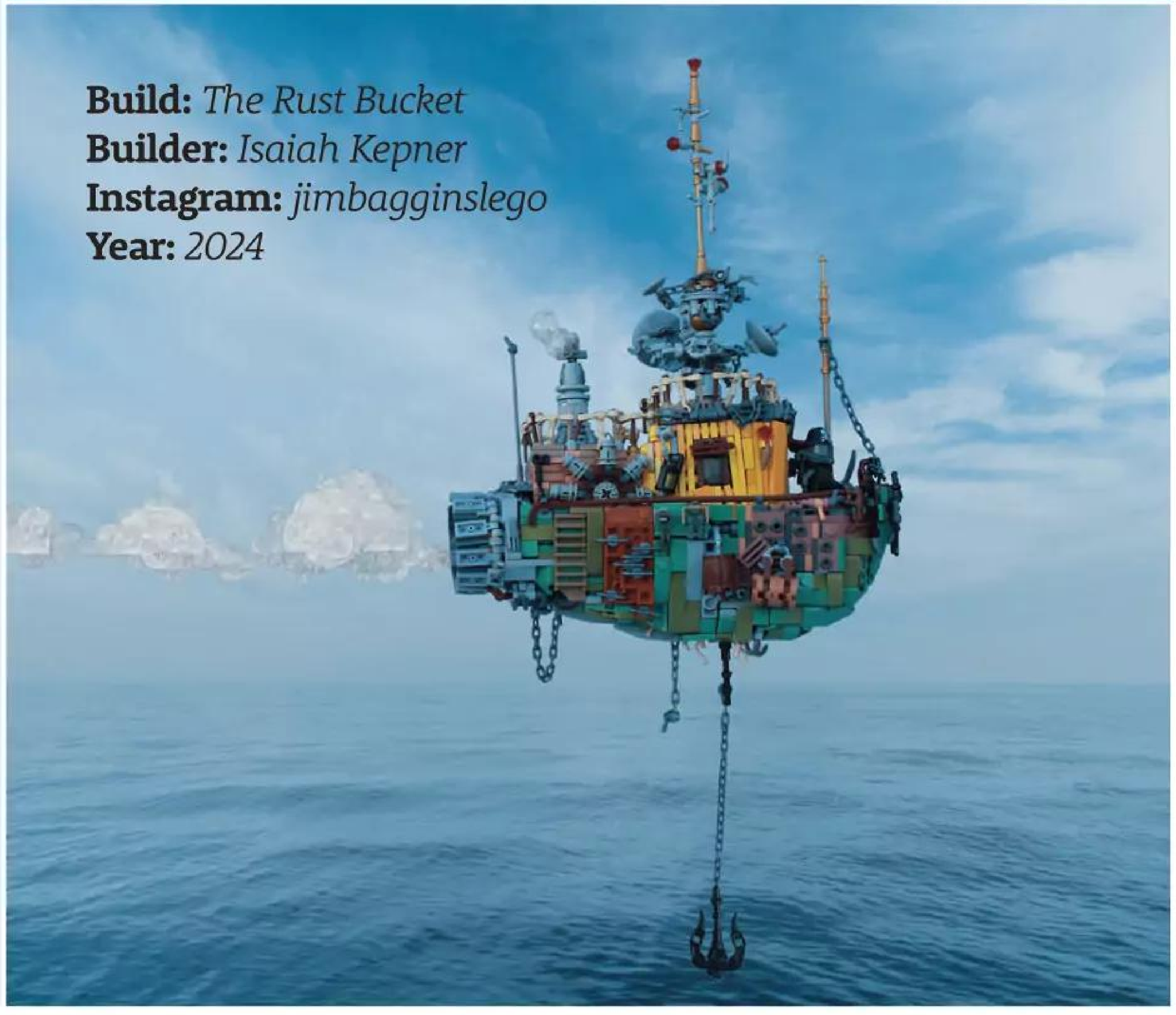
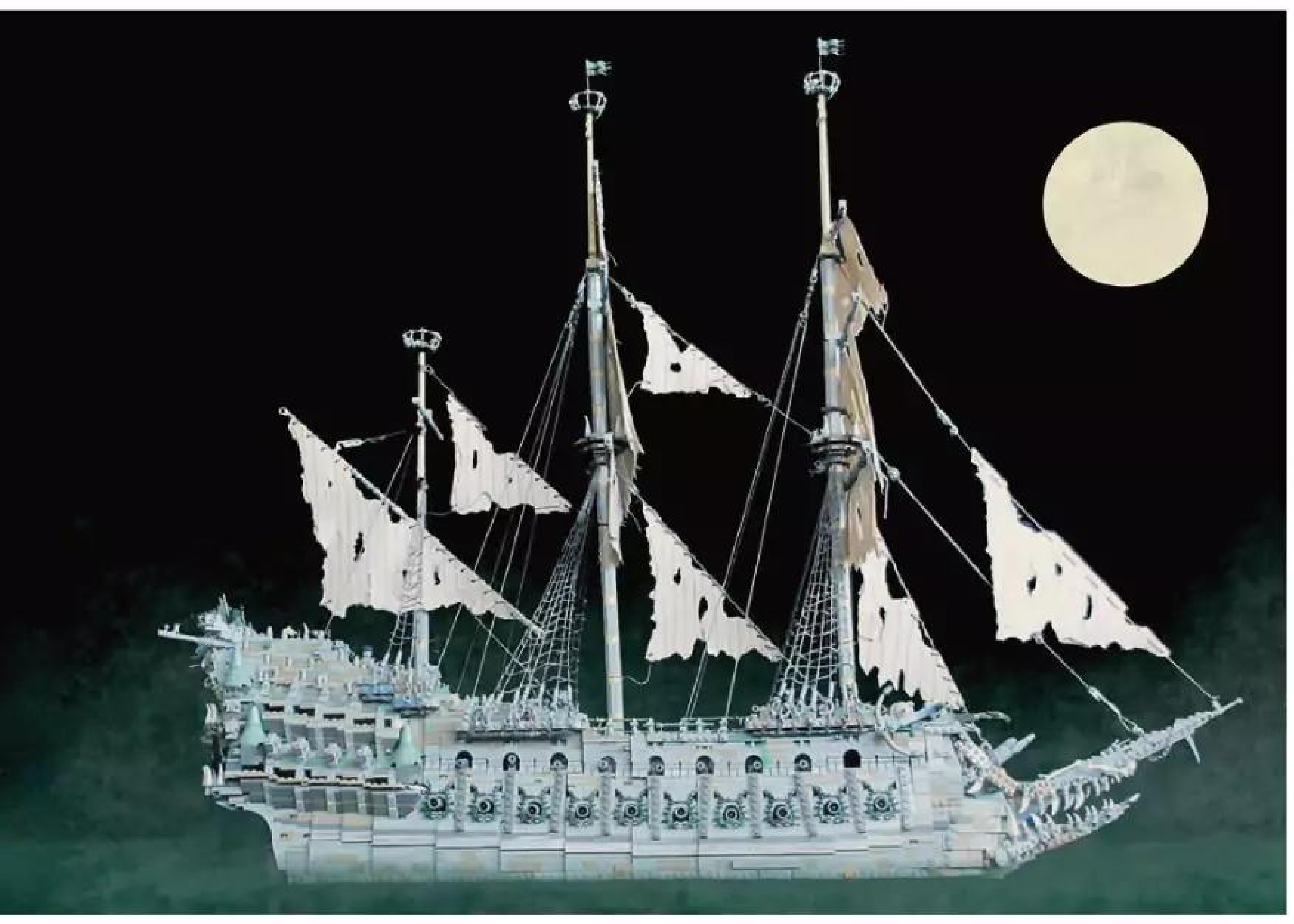
Builder: *Jonah Schultz*
Instagram: *silmaril_1*
Year: *2022*

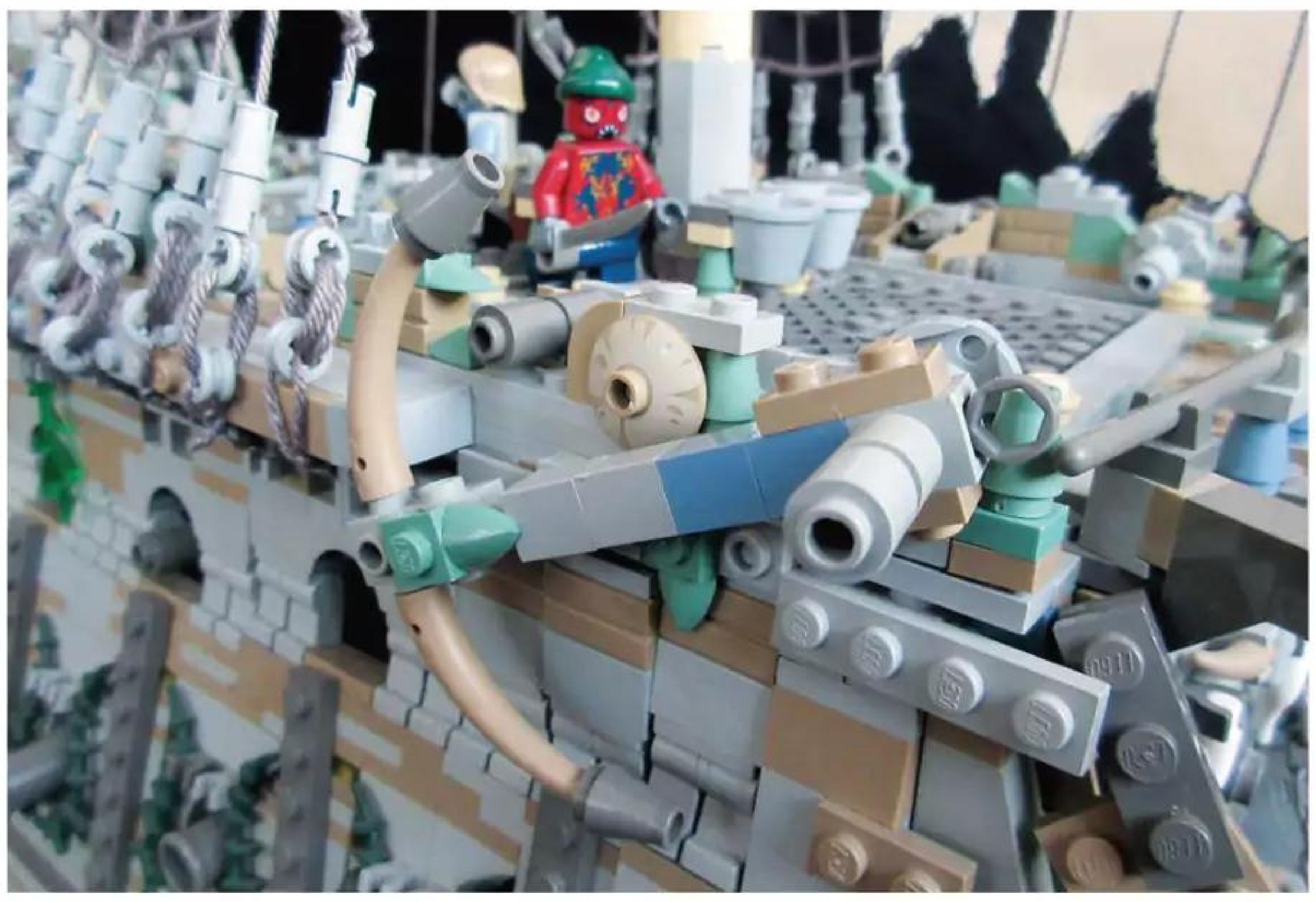


Build: *Viking Longship*
Builder: *Jonas Kramm*
Instagram: *jonaskramm*
Year: *2024*



Build: *The Rust Bucket*
Builder: *Isaiah Kepner*
Instagram: *jimbagginslego*
Year: *2024*





The Flying Dutchman

Light grey isn't the first colour that comes to mind when building a ship, but it perfectly captures the old, ghostly vibes of this Pirates of the Caribbean inspired vessel

***Words:** Geneva Durand*

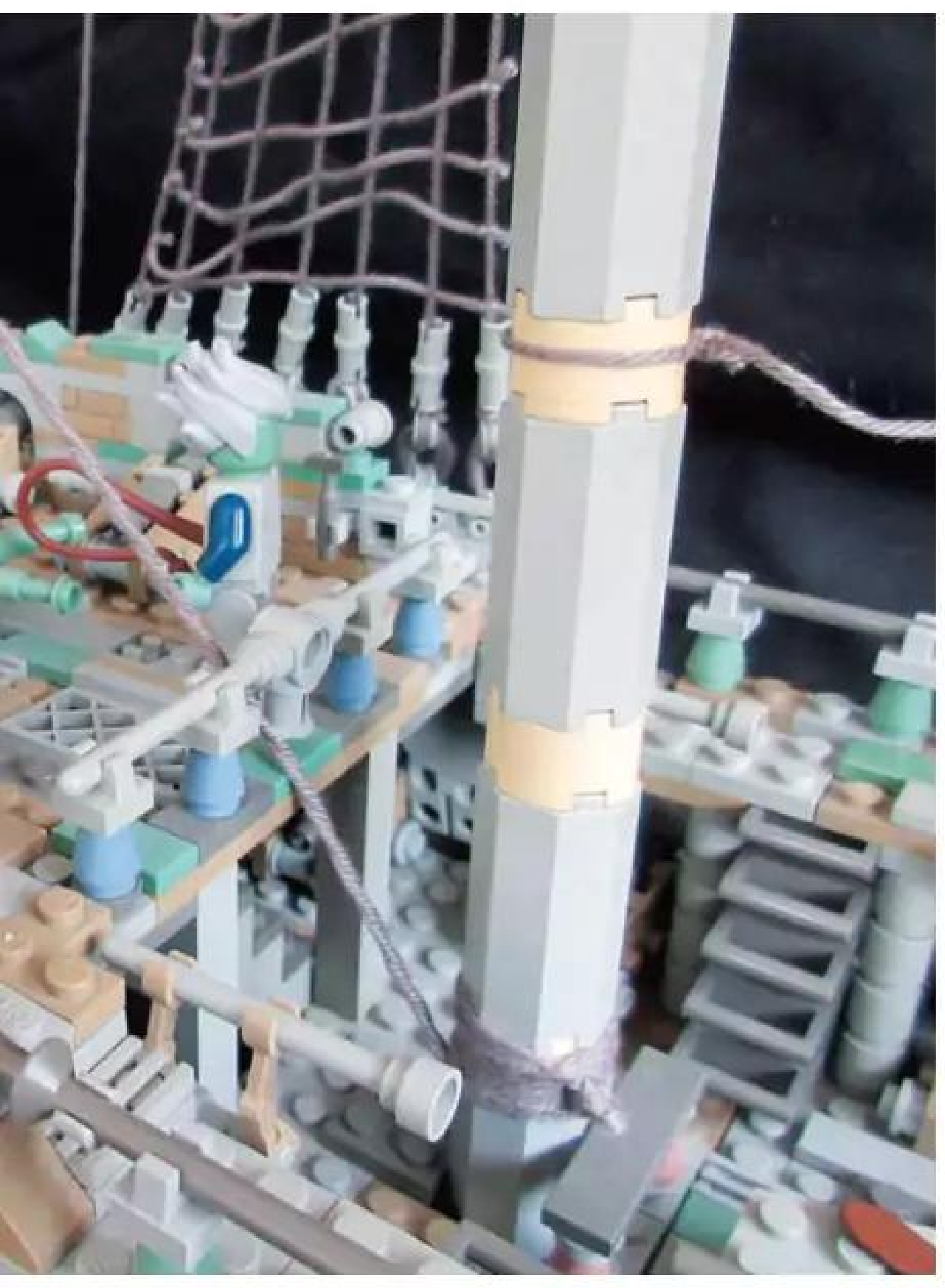
According to myth, the Flying Dutchman has roamed the seas for centuries, a ghostly appearance that heralds doom to the sailors who spot it. The legends have inspired countless depictions of the phantom ship in art, literature and film, arguably none more famous than the Pirates of the Caribbean version —and none cooler than Stefan Eeckman's LEGO tribute to the elusive ship.

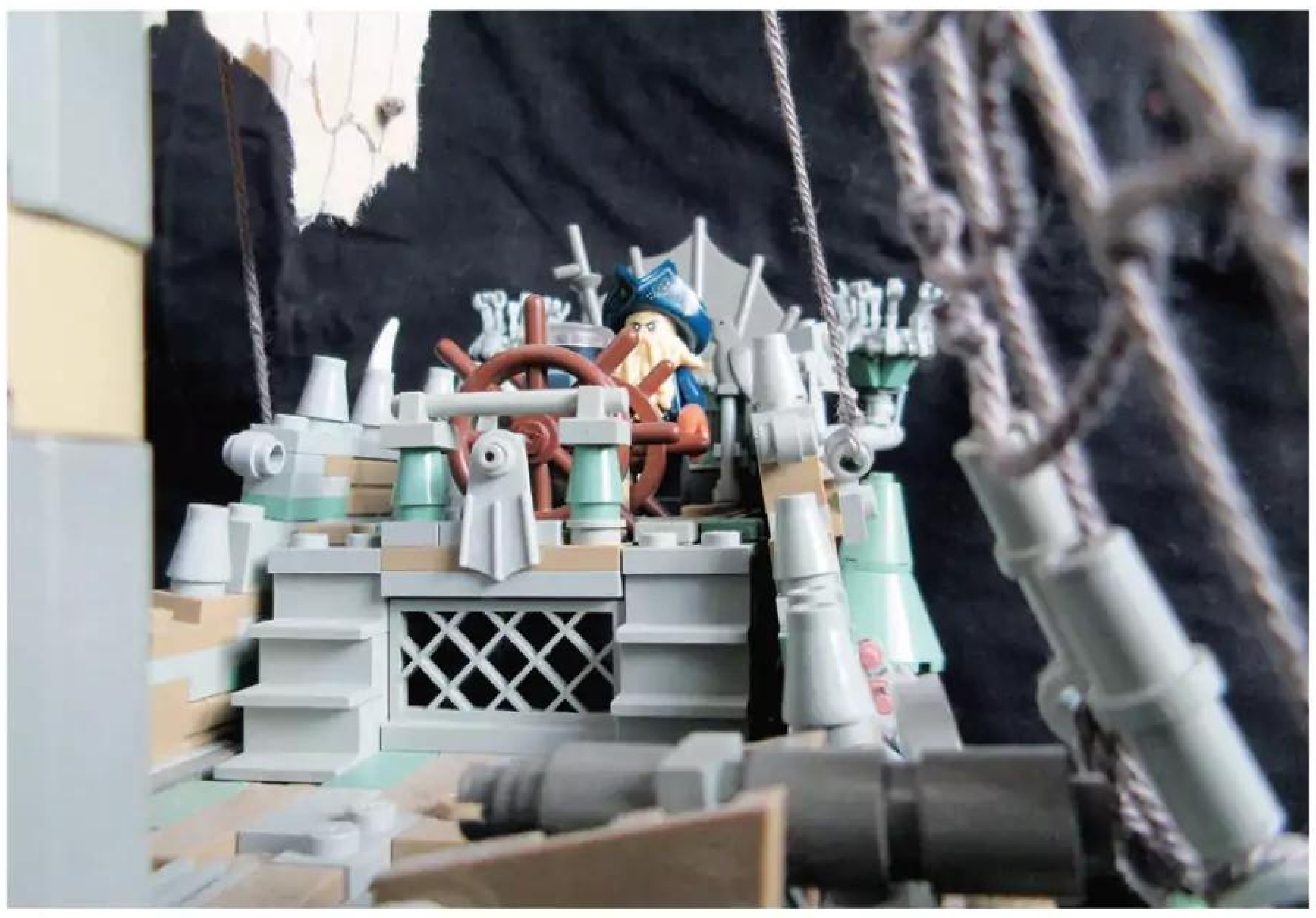
From his brilliant choice of colours — starring the often overlooked 'old' grey, a discontinued shade of light grey that is warmer than the colour that is produced today — to his handcrafted sails and rigging, Stefan's Flying Dutchman screams dangerous seas and foul weather ahead. There are more than 100 studs from stem to stern and with a sail height to match, this ship is as imposing as she is spooky. If its ghostly colours haven't sent you running, one look at the ferocious teeth lining the prow will surely put some wind in your sails!

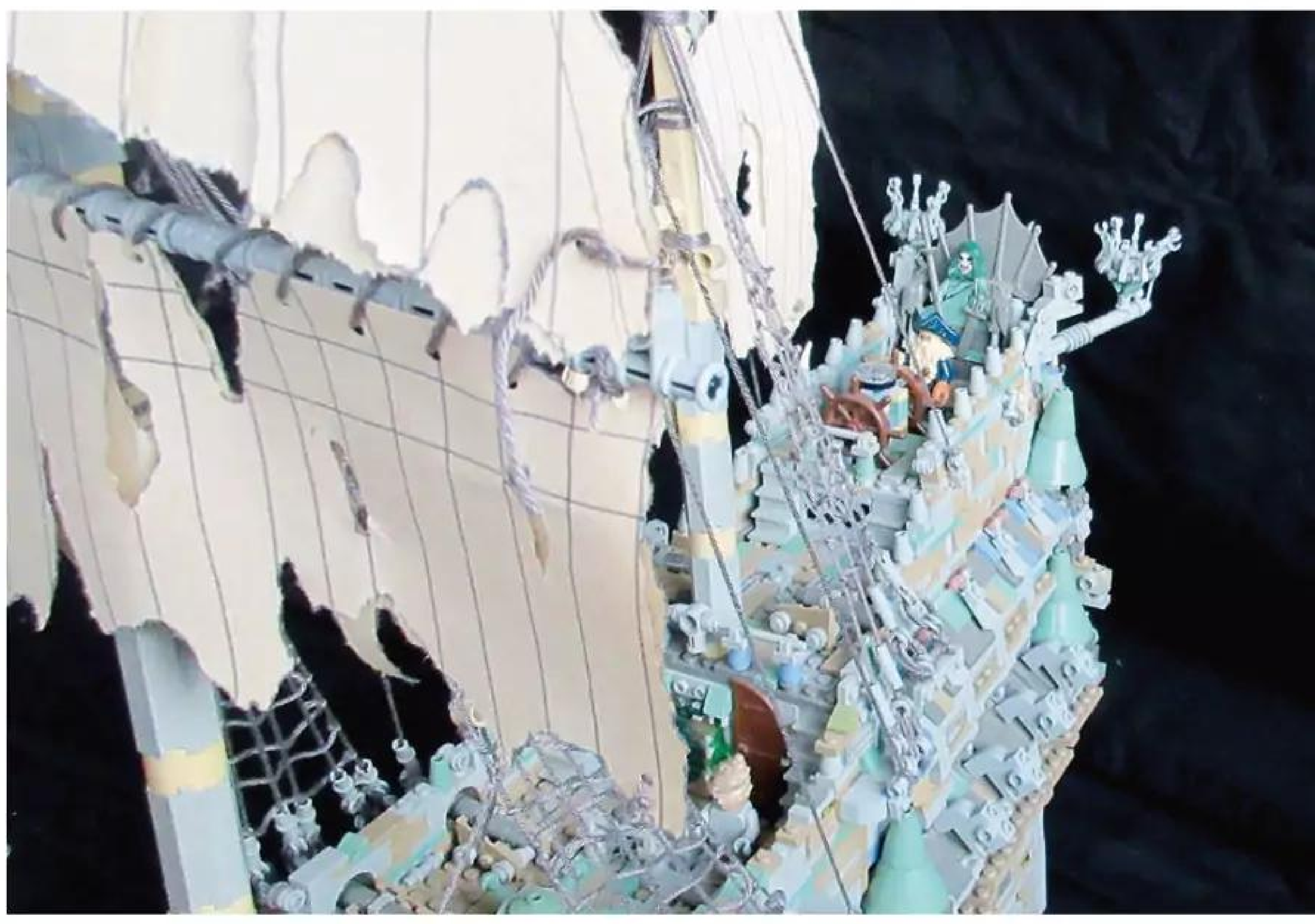
Stefan has been building LEGO ships for well over a decade and the Flying Dutchman was subject matter that caught his attention as far back as 2008. After crafting a smaller, blocky version that year, Stefan started again at a larger scale, building his collection of old light grey bricks and his arsenal of building techniques.

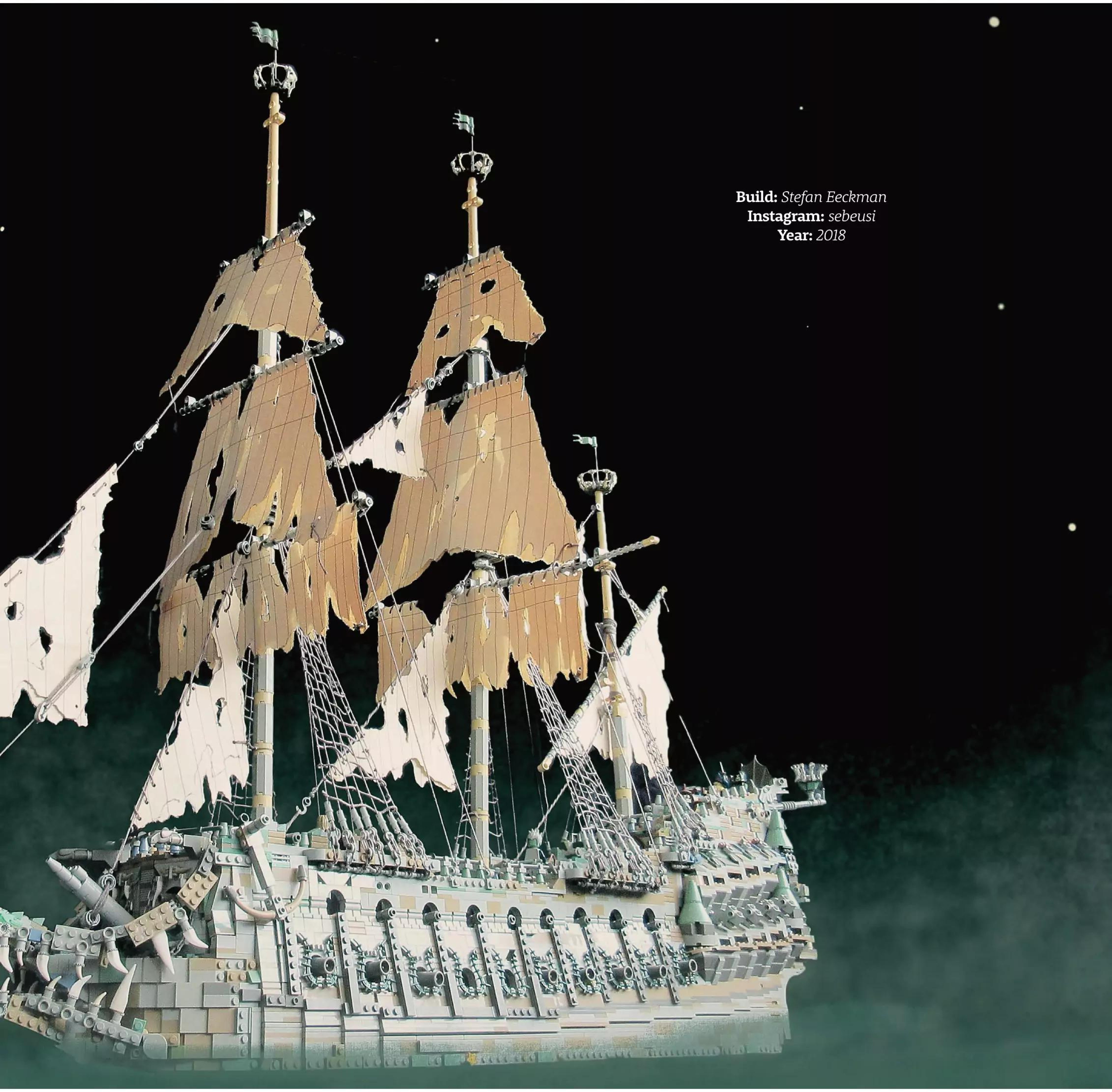
He refined the design over the span of a decade, until he deemed the ship is nearly perfect — though he dreams of still more improvements, especially to the interior. The ship has sailed to many fan conventions thanks to an enhancement — the hull has been redesigned to split in two.

Besides attracting attention at events, the Flying Dutchman also hit 10,000 supporters on LEGO Ideas back in 2012, though it was not approved to become an official set. Like any good legend, Stefan's Flying Dutchman remains a ship you can admire from afar, but can't ever quite lay your hands on.

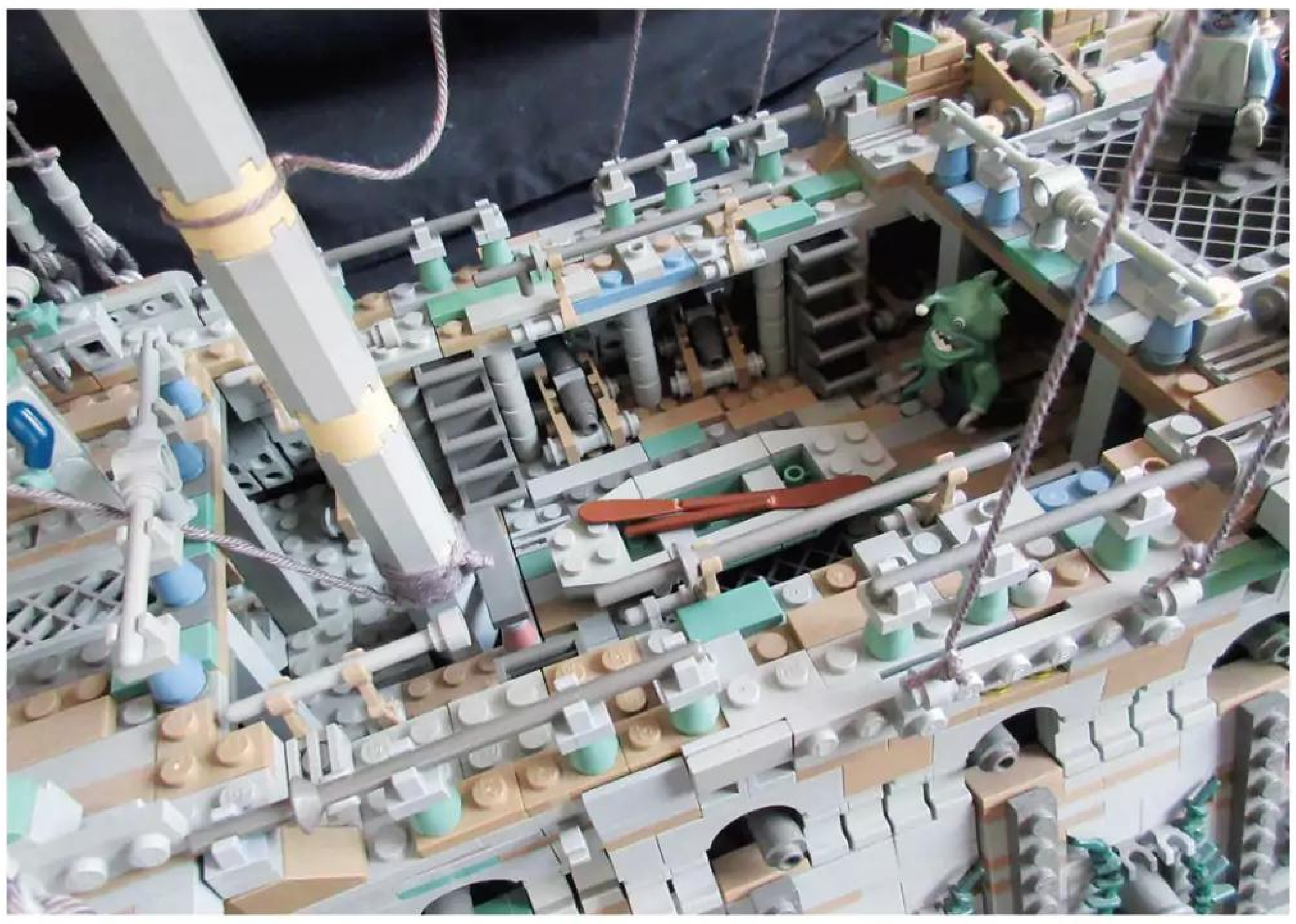


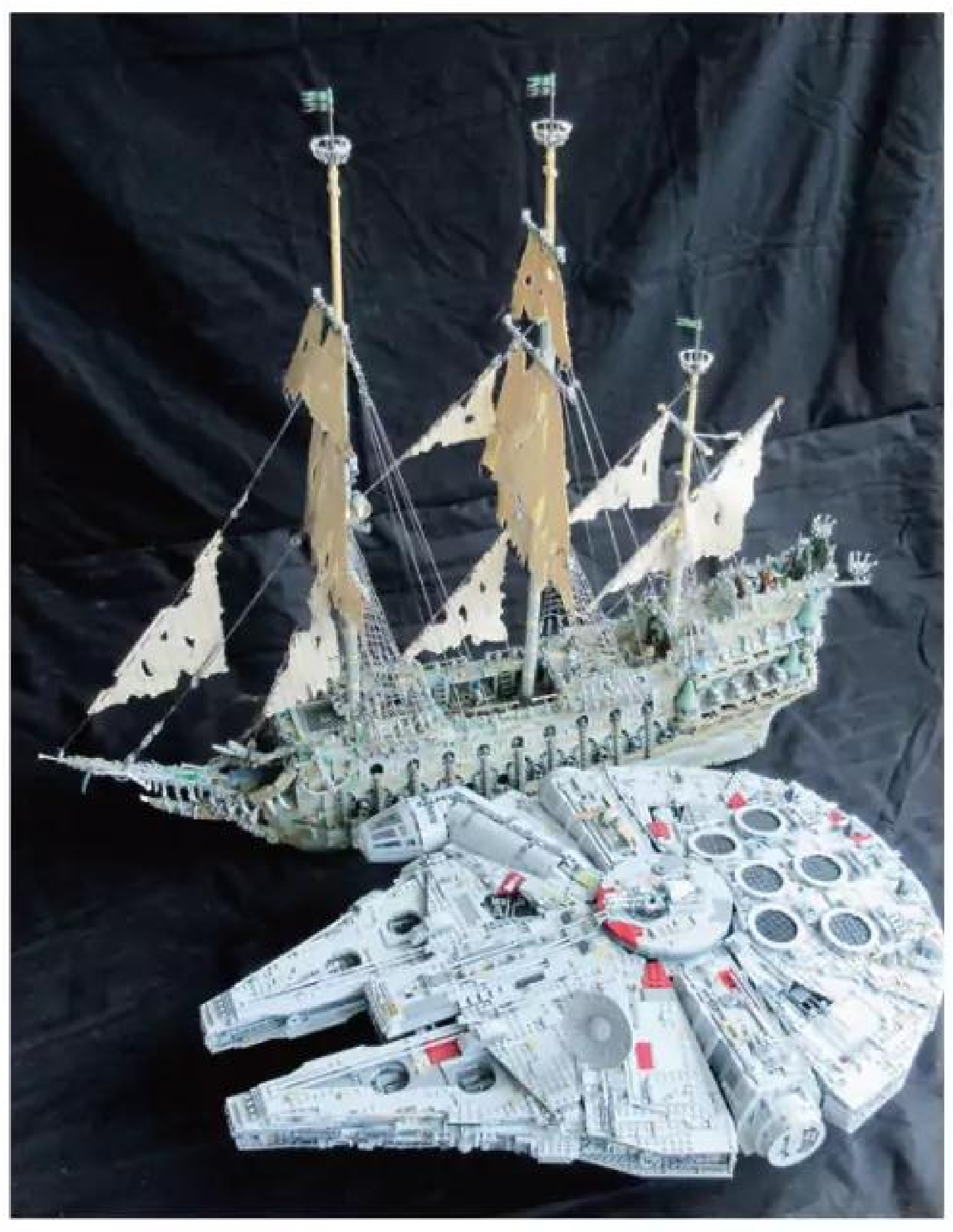


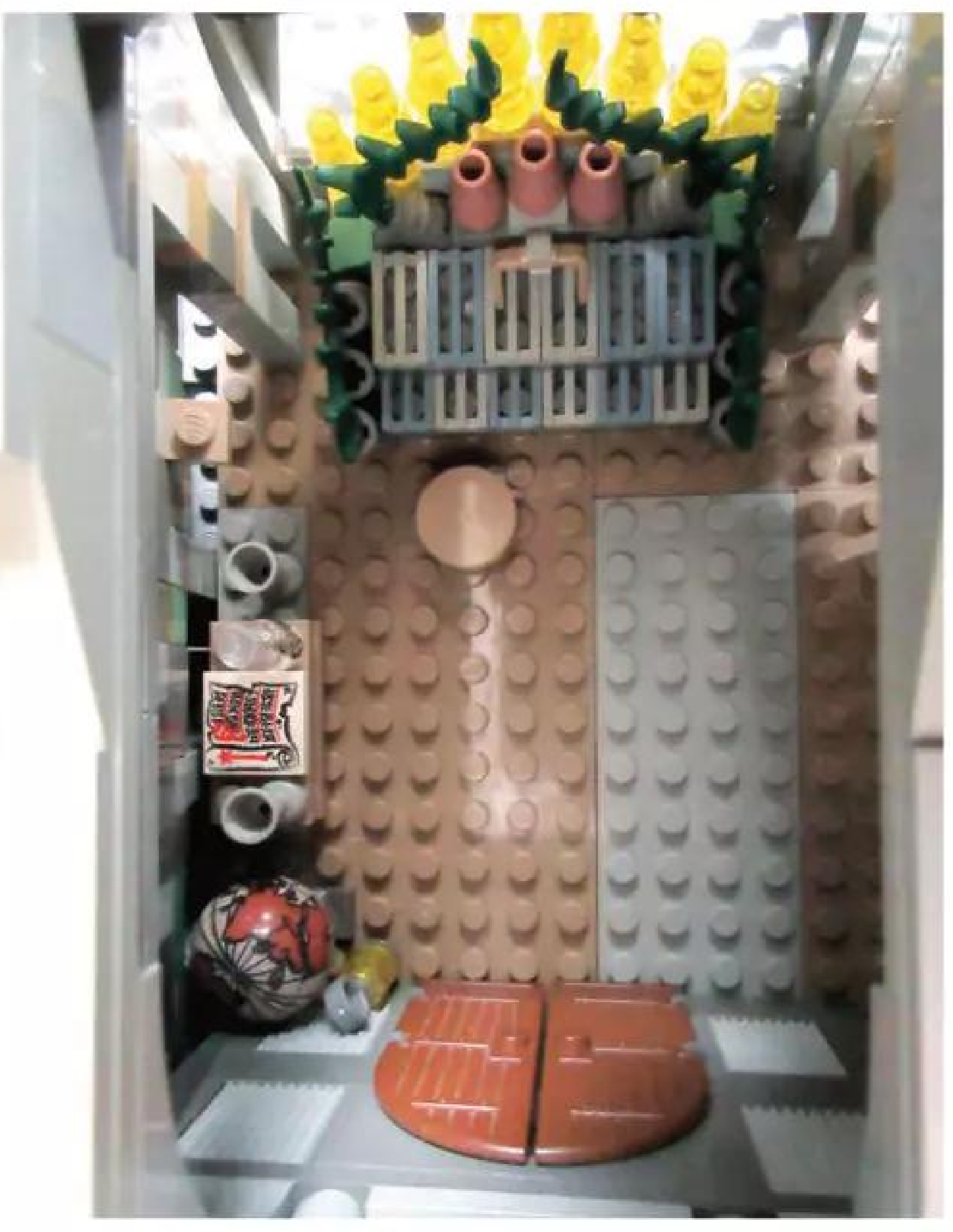




Build: *Stefan Eeckman*
Instagram: *sebeusi*
Year: *2018*







Blocks: What inspired you to build the Flying Dutchman?

Stefan: I have been a huge fan of the Pirates of the Caribbean franchise since the first movie, The Curse of the Black Pearl was released in theatres.

The Flying Dutchman is a true ghost ship in its own right, with elaborate carvings of demonic sea creatures and lost souls decorating the hull. And yet, underneath that haunting, weathered look, there is still a capable battleship based on a real historic warship, the famous Vasa. That made the Flying Dutchman a very interesting subject to take on.

What was the building process like?

I found a schematic from the original movie set and based it on that; I made my own drawing with rough, stud-based dimensions. That helped me to get the general proportions of the hull right but also the position of key features such as the cannon ports, the staircases, galleries and so on.

I alternated between technically building a sturdy and accurate hull and then designing the smaller details that were most fun, such as the organ, capstan and triple cannons. I prioritised certain things – the first version had a complete interior for instance, on later versions a lot of that was removed in favour of structural integrity.

How did you choose such unusual colours for the ship?

It was very clear to me from the start that a muted colour palette would be appropriate to recreate the famous ghost ship.

I chose to use old grey as a base colour, due to its more brownish tone compared to the newer bluish grey, which makes it much more suitable to use on a 'wooden' ship. The difference is subtle but you can really tell when the ship is side by side with a new grey LEGO creation, like the Millennium Falcon.

Dark tan worked well as a complementary colour. Along with the grey, it helped to create that weathered look I was going for. A little bit of sand green and olive green, spread over the whole ship, accentuate the marine flora, which has attached to the ship due to the extensive time it has been underwater.

How long did it take you to build the whole MOC?

I constructed a prototype way back in 2011. Around a year later, I had finished the first version. In 2017 I gave it a complete makeover, expanding the hull and adding more details. I have been making small changes to it ever since. Even now I still have plans to give the captain quarters and stern windows a makeover.

It's difficult to put a number on it in terms of building hours, certainly I've spent many and I've spent them happily.

What was the most challenging part?

The most challenging part was constructing the lower hull. It is completely brick built, no prefab hull pieces used. It took a lot of figuring out to get a base that was strong enough to support the weight and length of the ship while still featuring all the angles and offsets, which were needed to get the typical galleon shape right. For the latest version I actually redesigned the hull so it splits in two, for easier transportation.

What is your favourite part of this build?

My personal favourite is the organ, hidden away in the captain's quarters. As I have played the organ myself, I have a special affinity for the instrument. It is due for a makeover though. I can't wait to get started with that.

Did you hand-tie your rigging? How challenging was that?

Hand-tying rigging takes some practice to get right though it is worth the effort. It is aesthetically far superior to using ladder pieces (which are typically used on standard sets). It does come with some challenges – the masts and stays need to be strong enough to handle the pulling forces and it makes accessing the interior considerably more difficult.

Adding the ratlines to the shrouds, without deforming them, is a meticulous job. Fortunately, in the case of the Flying Dutchman, doing a rather sloppy job at that was justified, as it complements the desired weathered appearance of the ship.

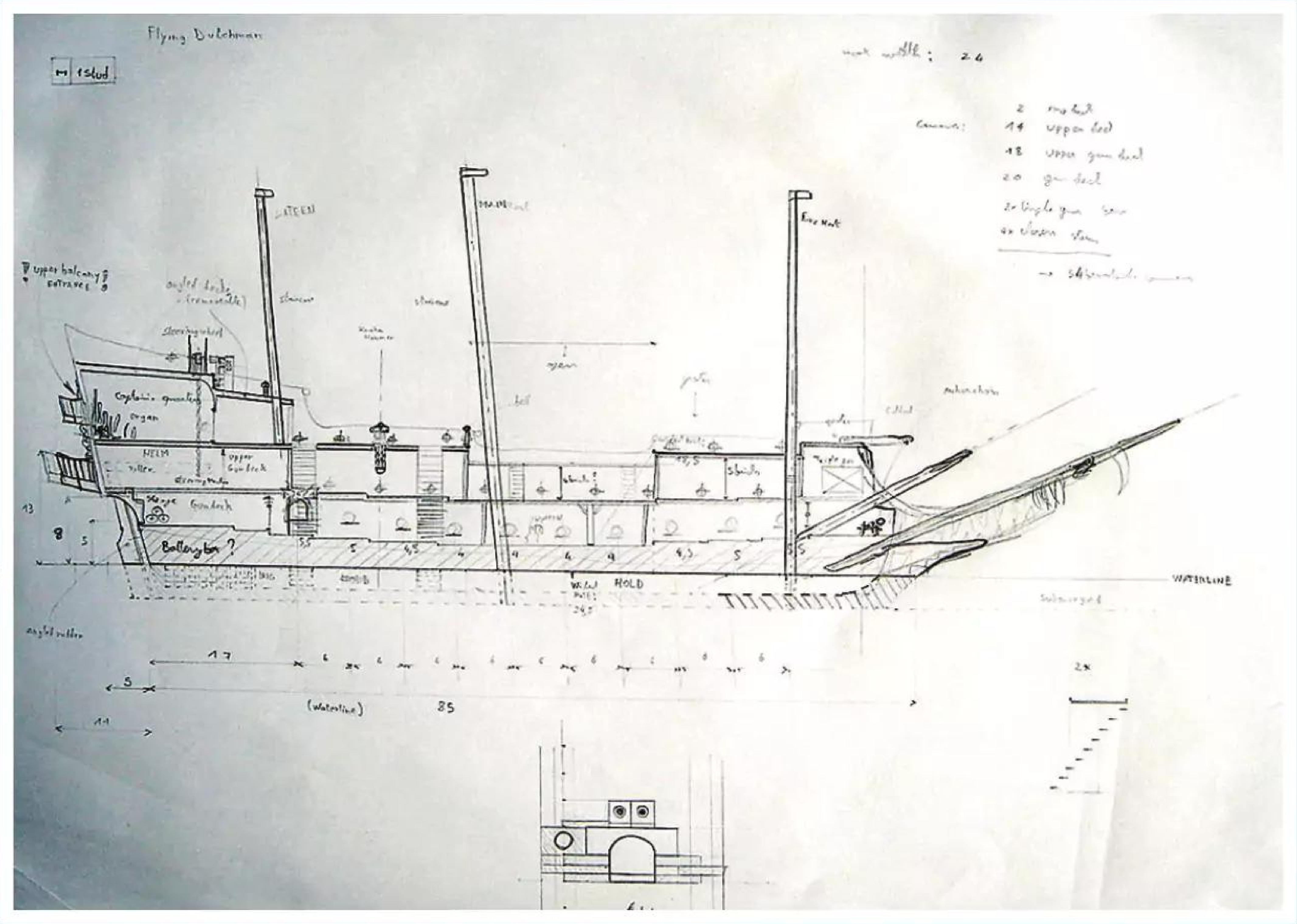
What shows has this ship sailed to so far? Have there been any interesting public reactions?

I've exhibited the ship at many local Belgian events but I also found my way to some international events such as Skærbæk Fan Weekend, LEGO World and Floating Bricks. The Flying Dutchman is always an eye-catcher at these events and quite often triggers questions from visitors, such as 'where can I buy it?' or 'where can I find building instructions?', which I consider to be the greatest of compliments.

LEGO World Utrecht is on the upcoming agenda, where the Flying Dutchman will be part of a sea battle scene.

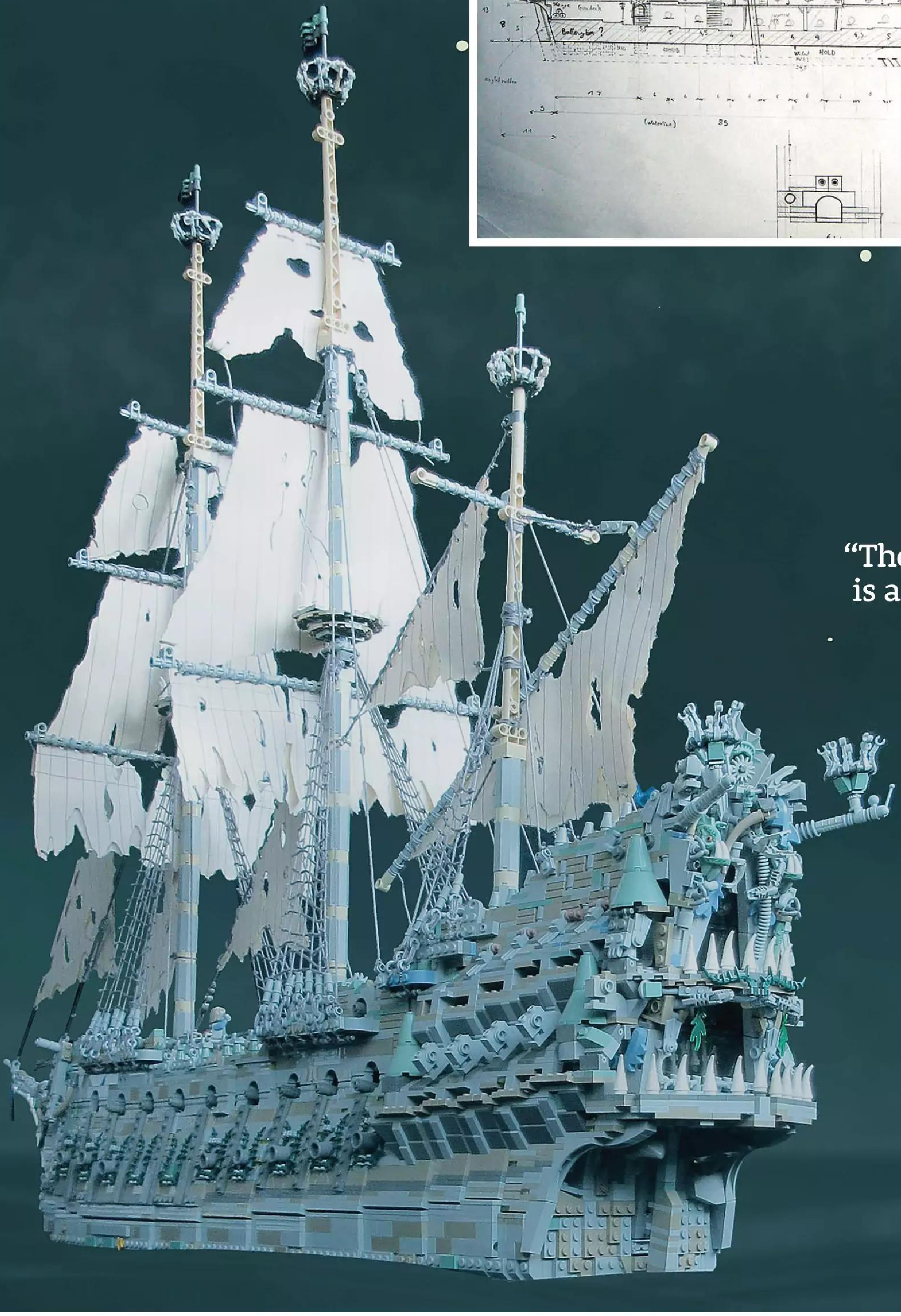
Do you have any new ships in the works? What new LEGO project are you working on now?

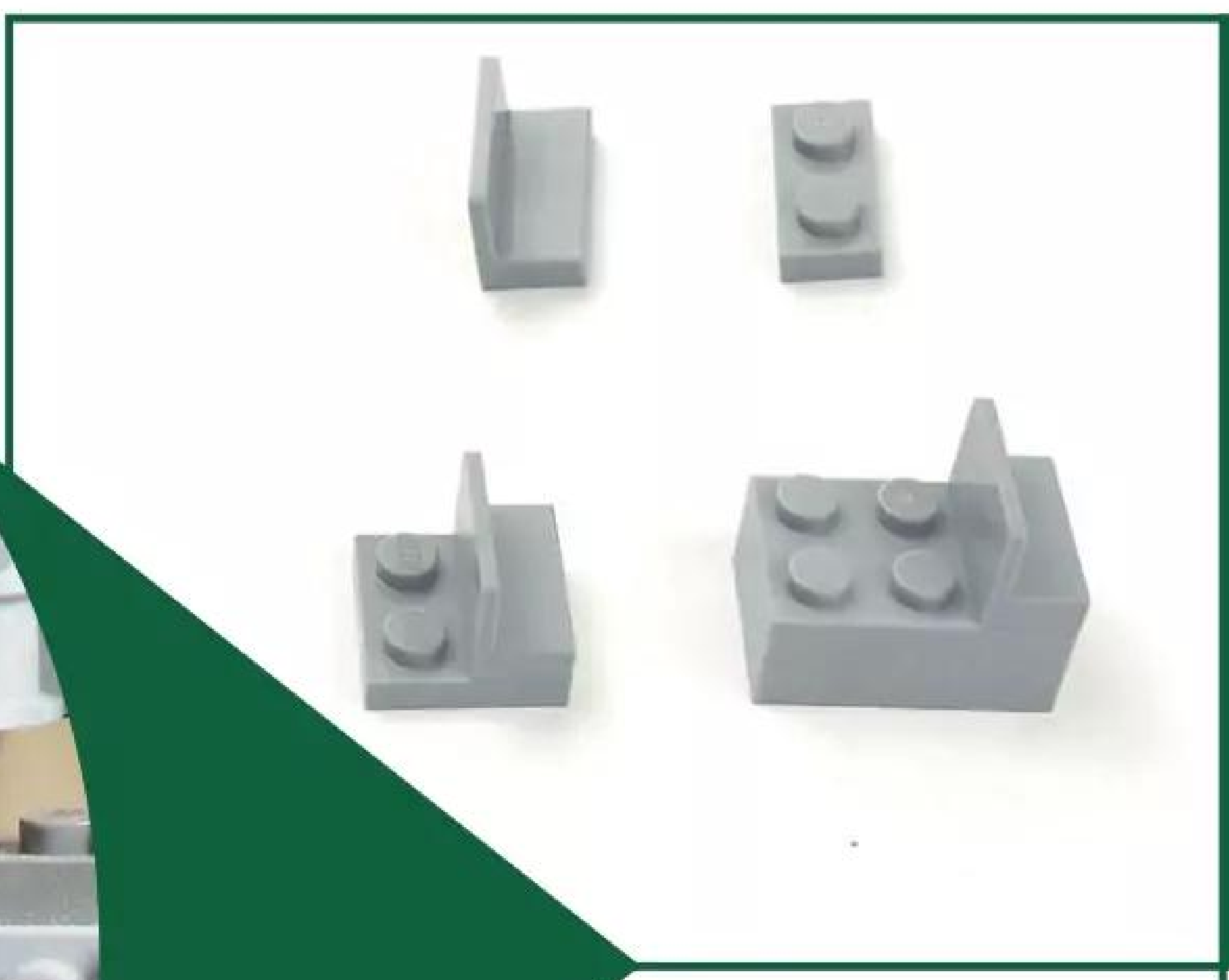
I'm always working on ships! These days I'm working on a ship based somewhat on the Inferno, the pirate ship from The Goonies. But I'm also collecting parts for a spaceship MOC inspired by Amazon temples, which I want to start building next year.


Flying Dutchman
1 stud
STERN
MAIN
WATERLINE
HOLD
Ballast bin?
(waterline)
35

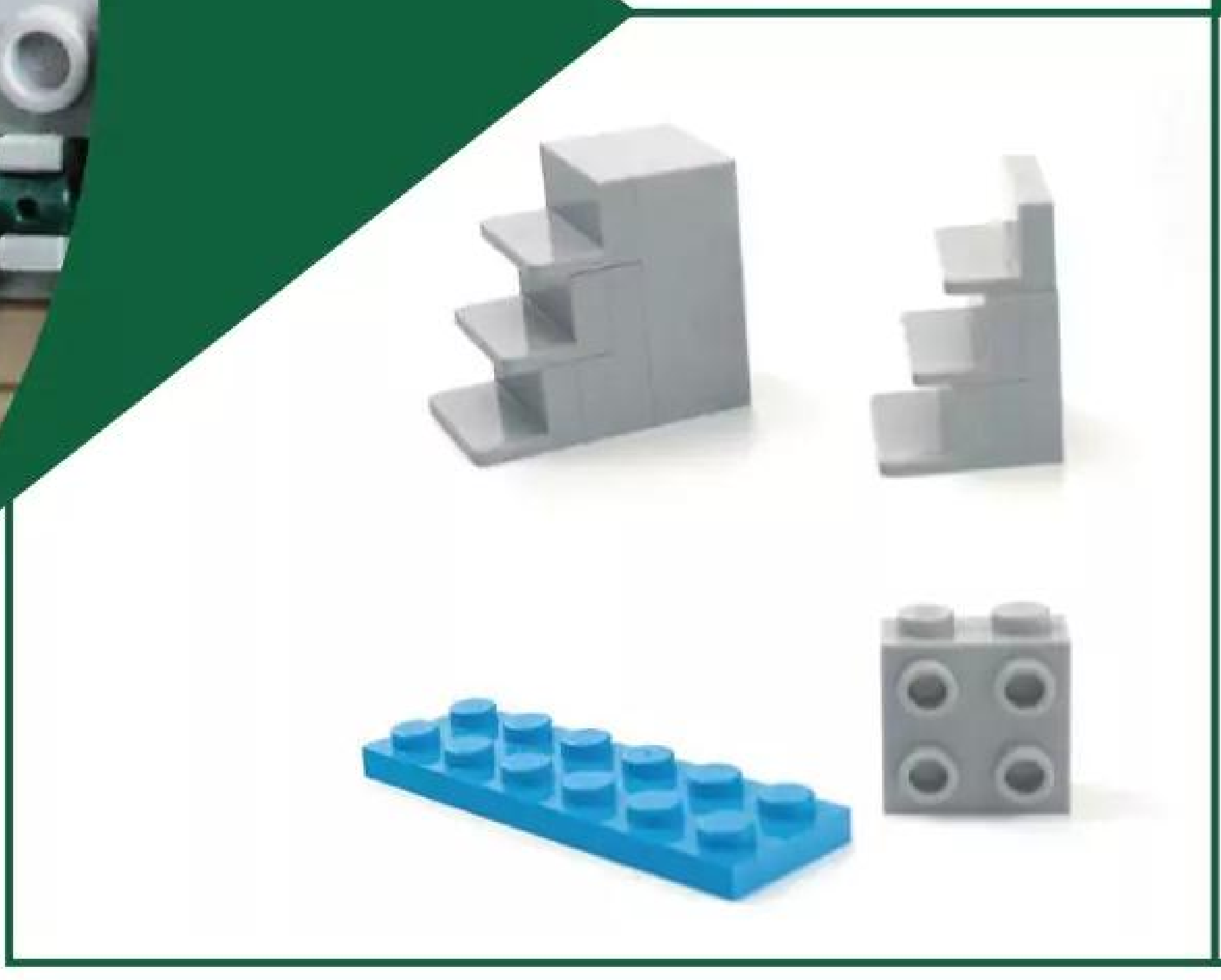
Stefan sketched out his plans.

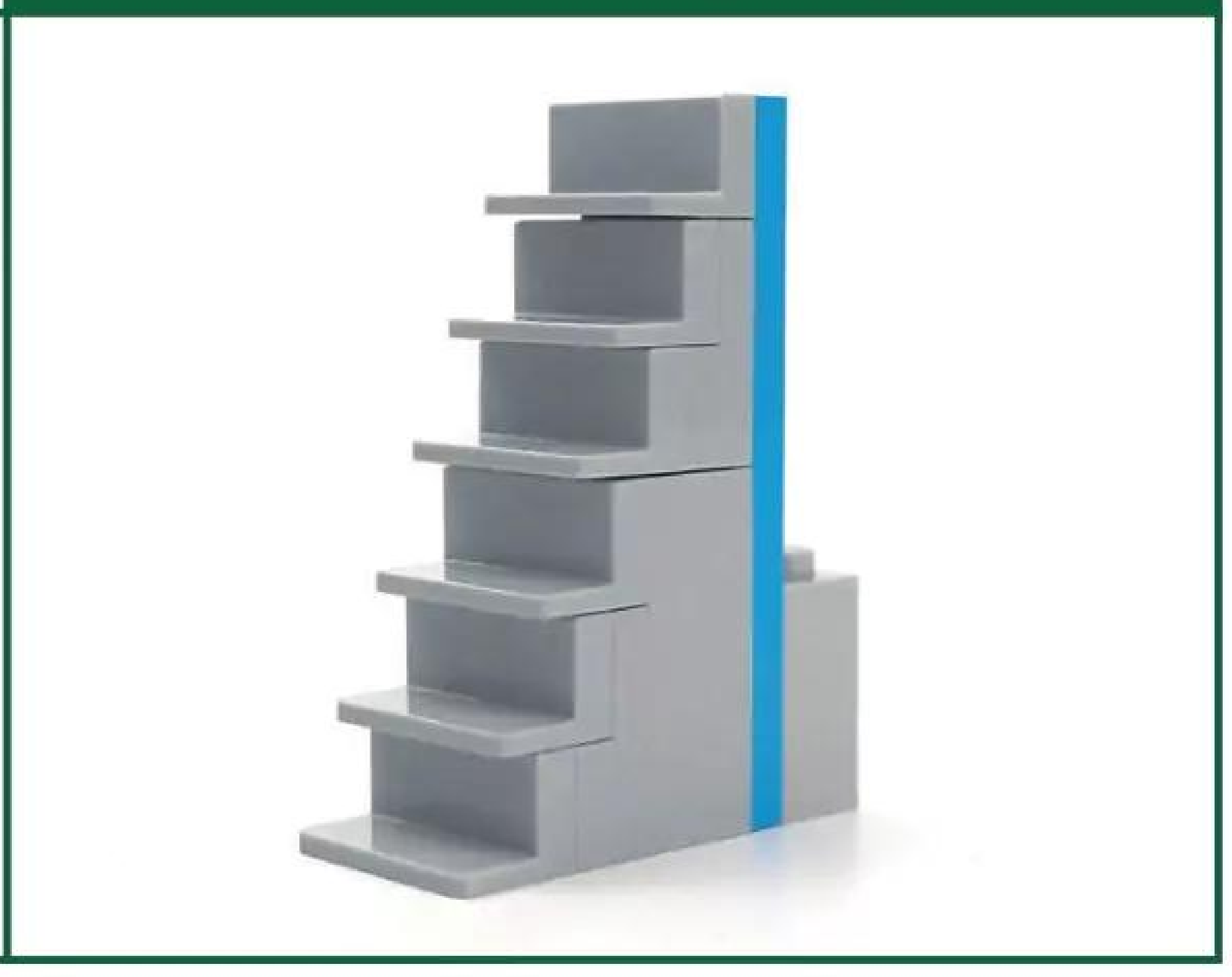
> “The Flying Dutchman is a true ghost ship in its own right.”

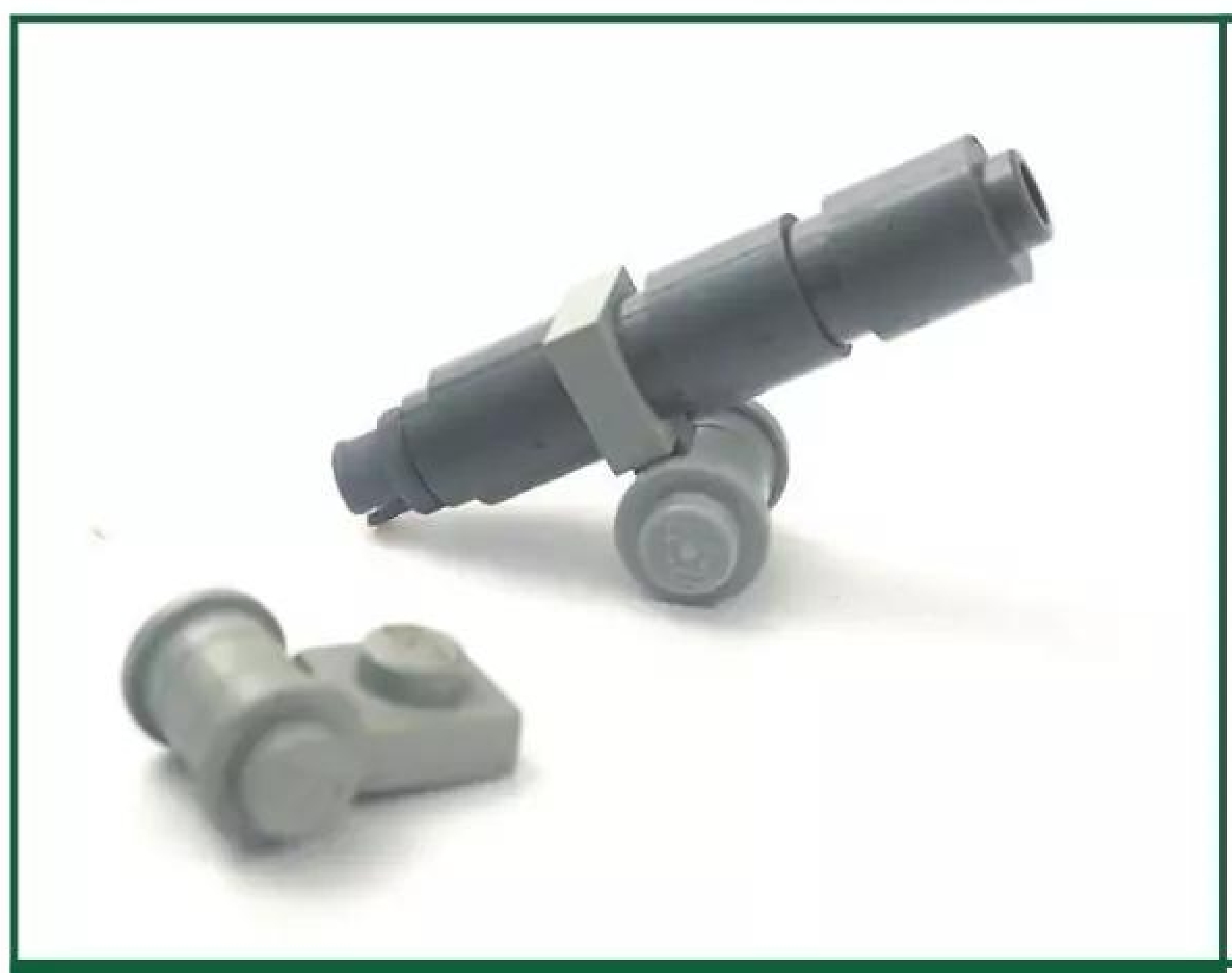


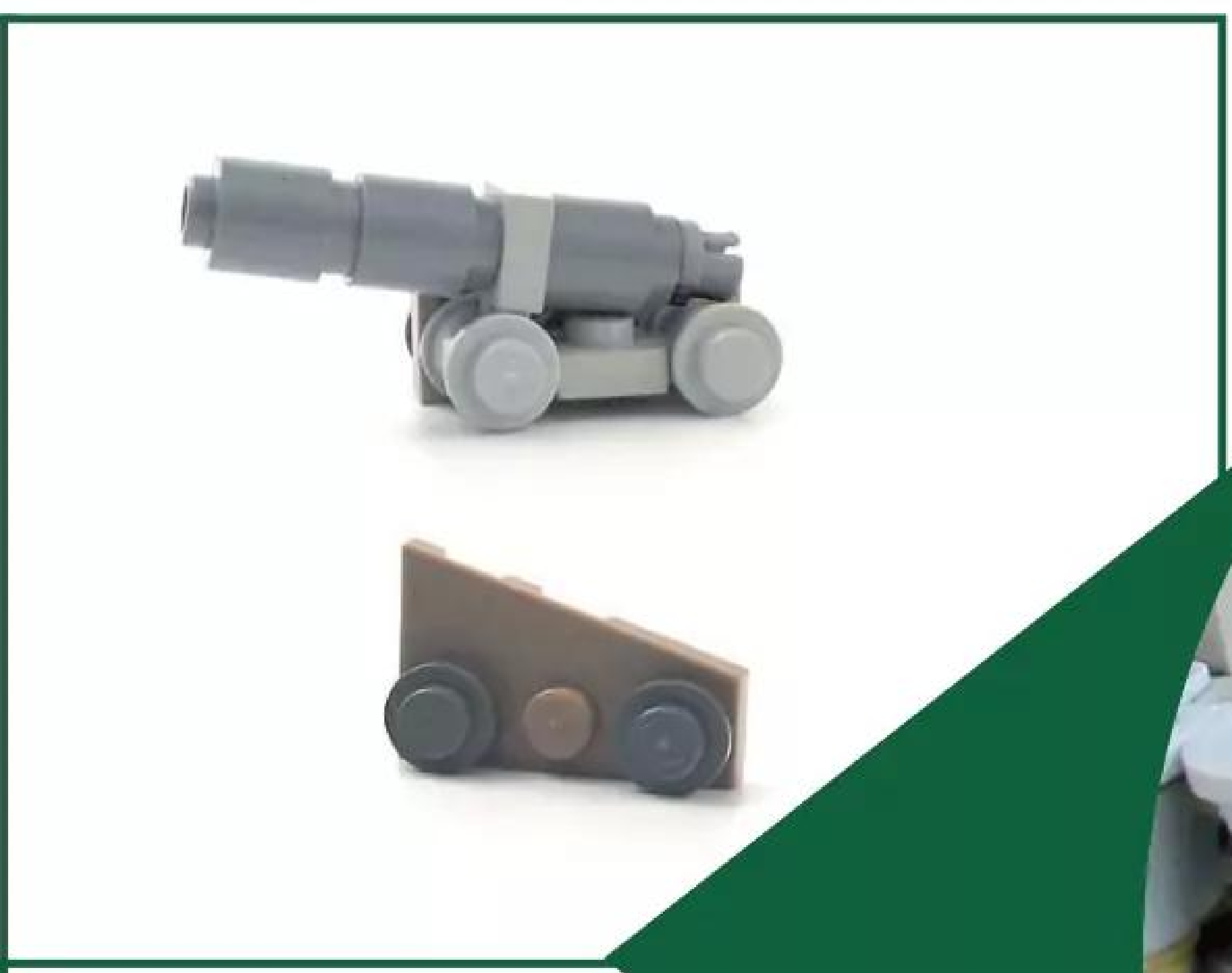


Stairs can take up a lot of space, making them tricky to integrate into a MOC and. Stefan successfully squeezed these six stairs onto a footprint barely over 4 studs, using 1x2 panels to create thin edges so the stairs can mount rapidly along their vertical without looking impossible to climb.

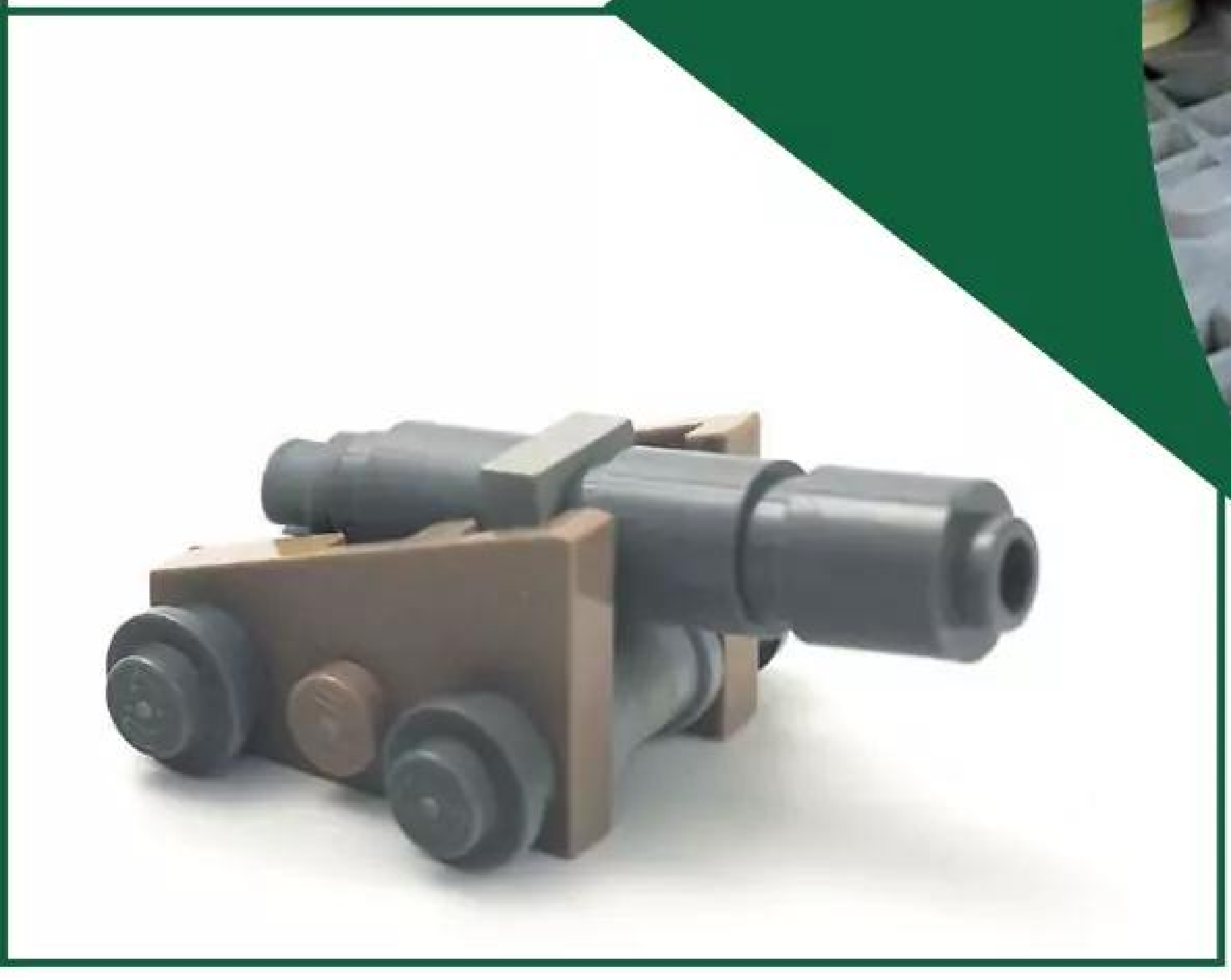


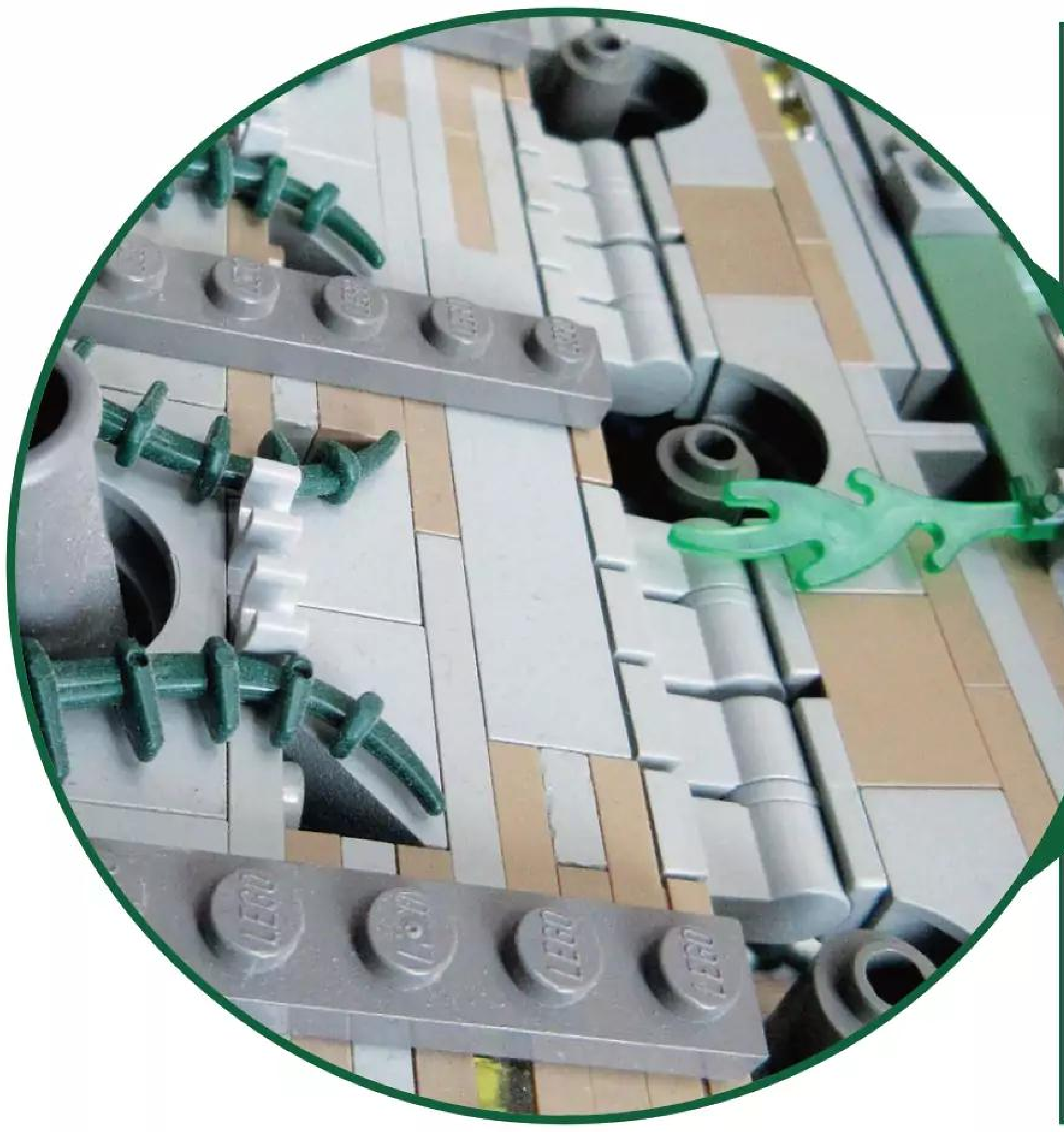


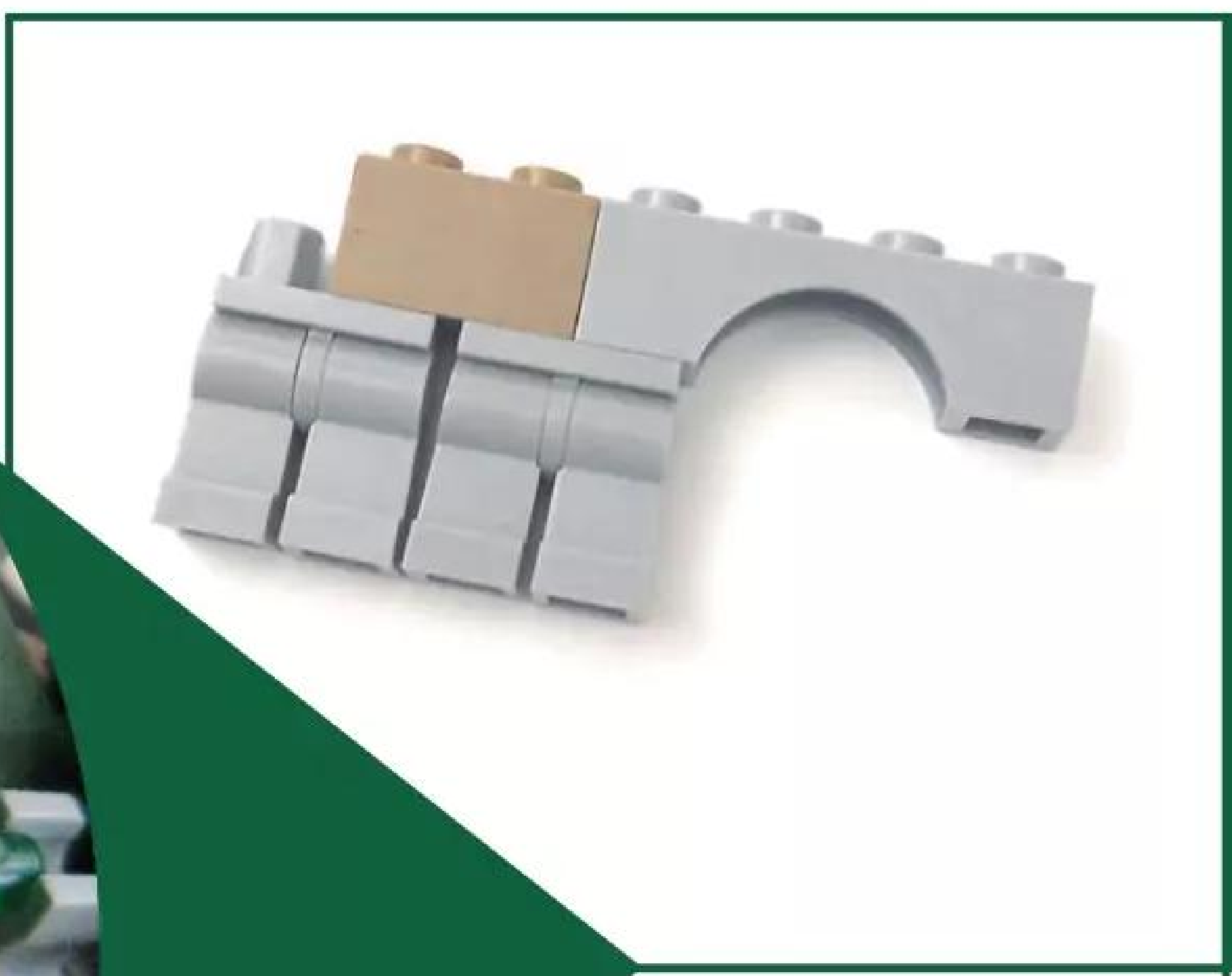




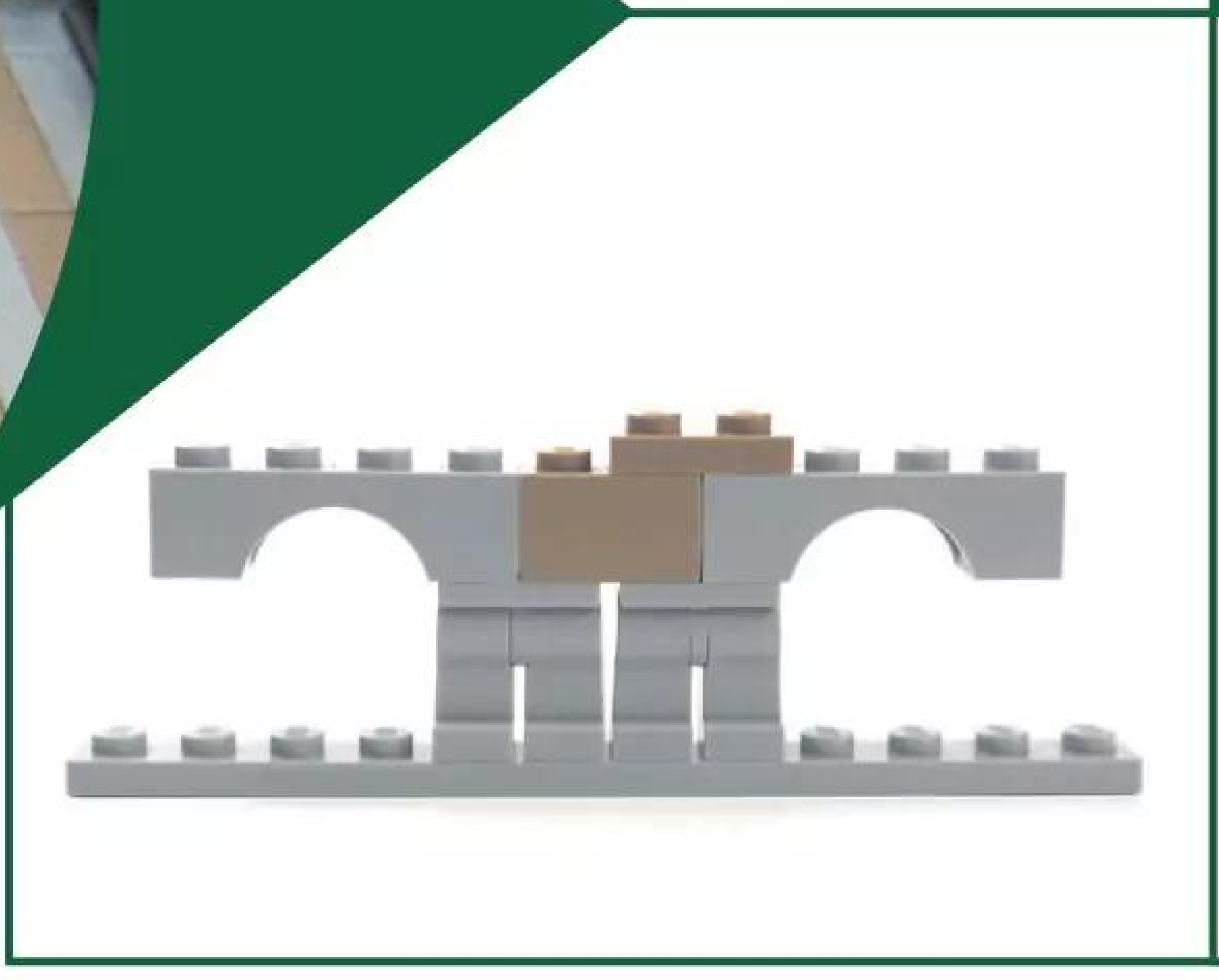
These cannons make effective use of some simple parts — a pair of wedge plates, a few round bricks, and the always handy 1x1 ring plate, allowing the cannon stock to be angled as desired. A Technic pin at the back adds just a touch of extra detail to elevate the design.

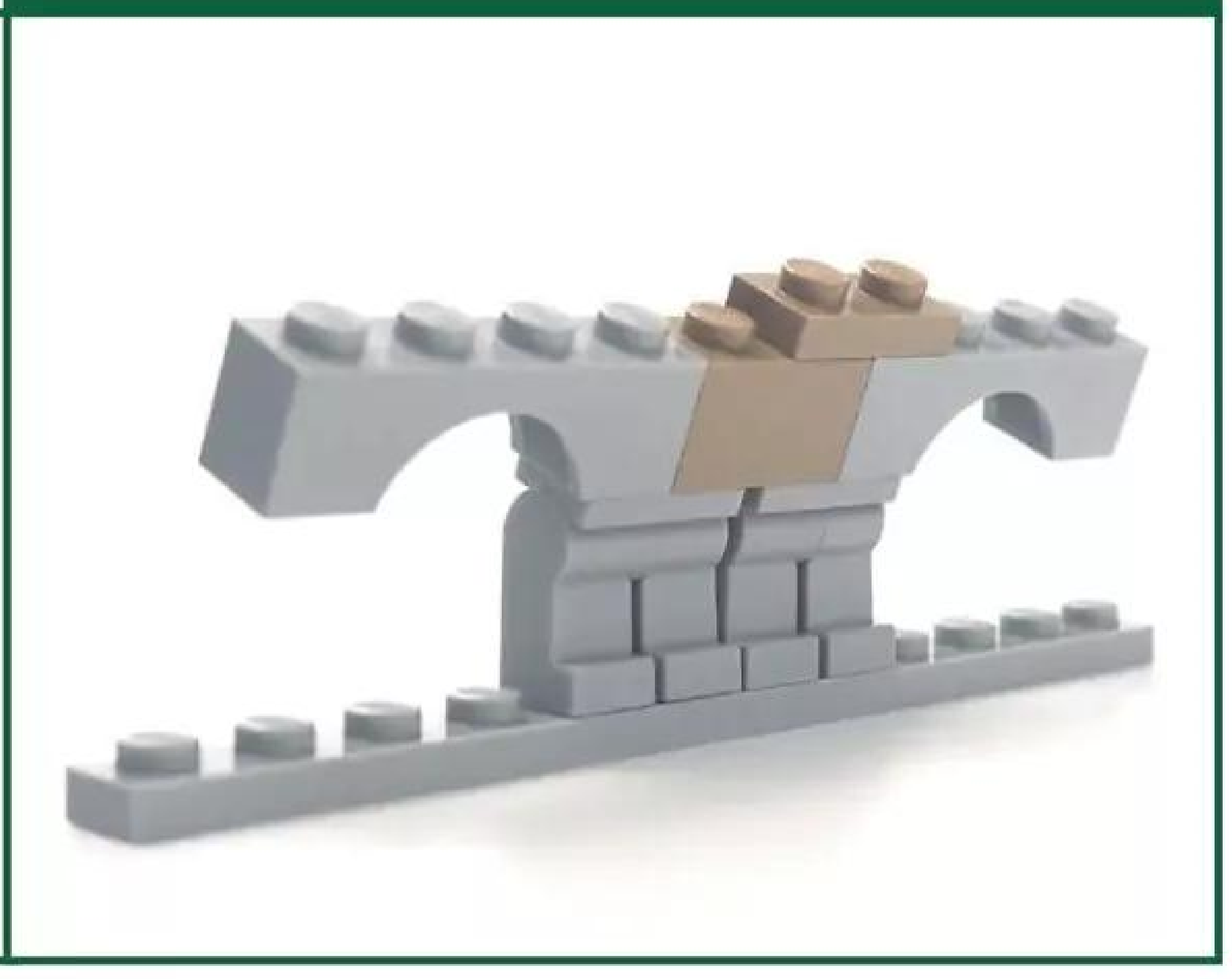


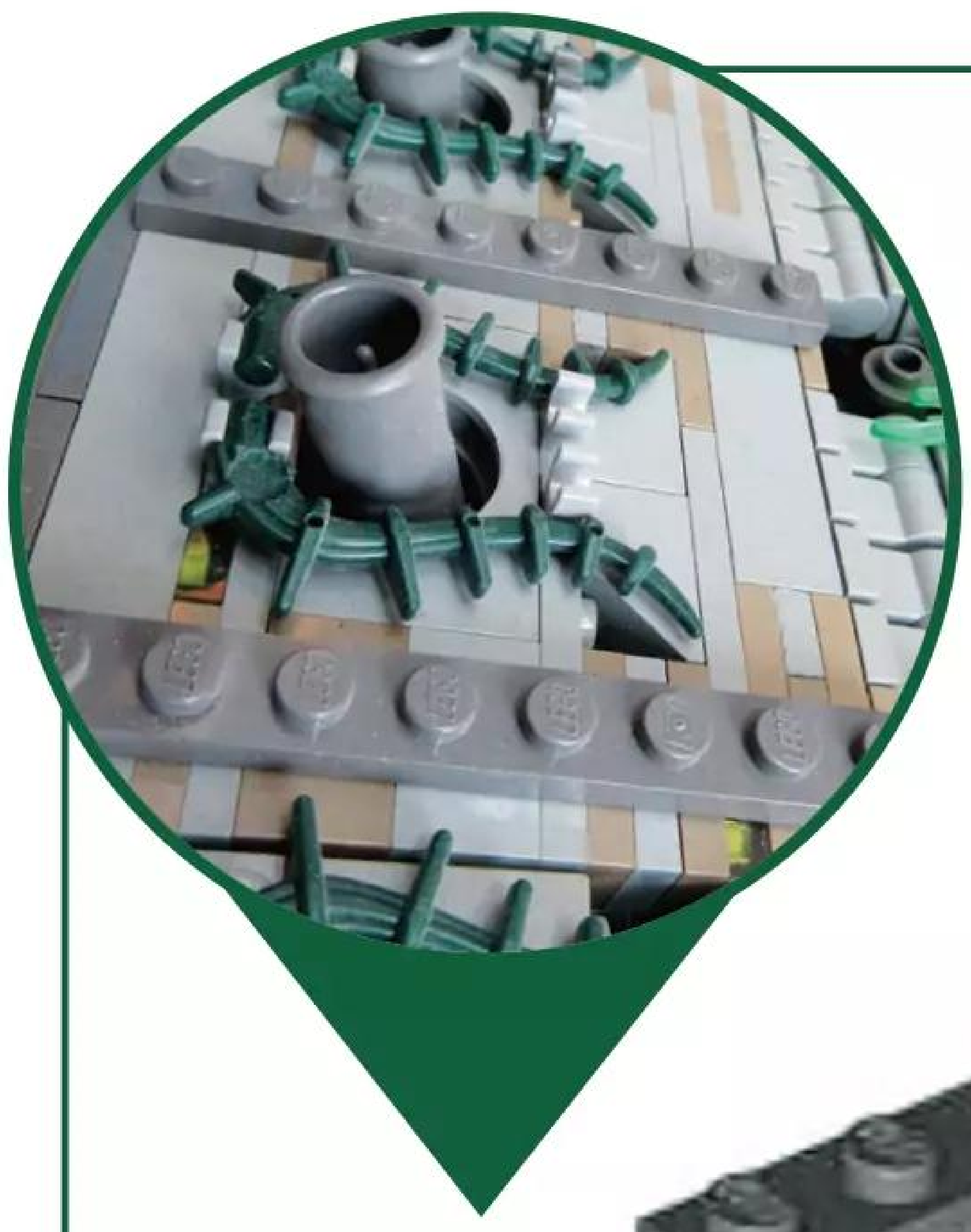




Creating angles with LEGO bricks often involves lots of clips, hinges or joints wiggling around behind the scenes — but Stefan's ingenious choice of minifigure legs offered a chance to seamlessly bend his ship's hull without any complicated background techniques. If that weren't enough, they also add visual interest with their unique shape.

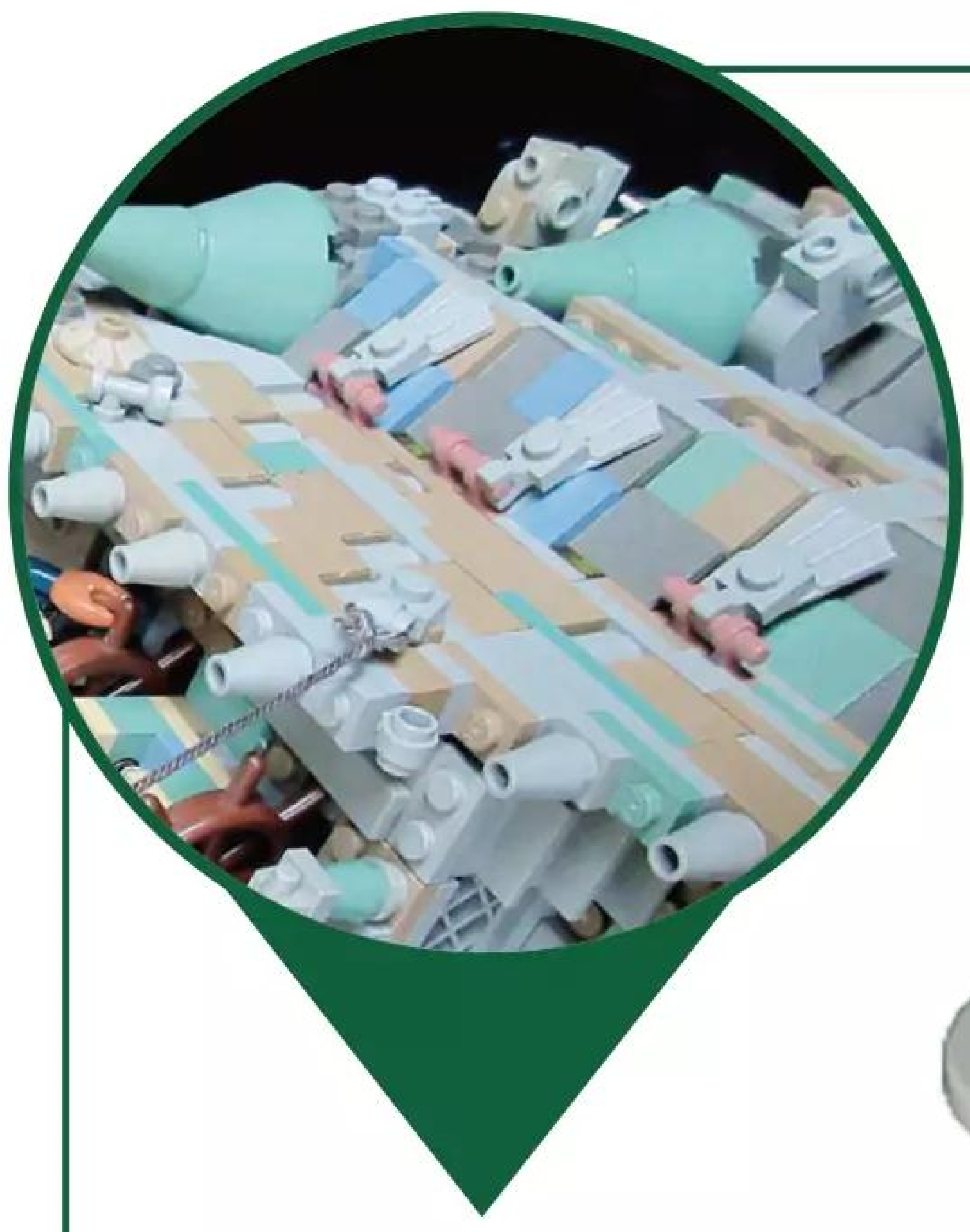






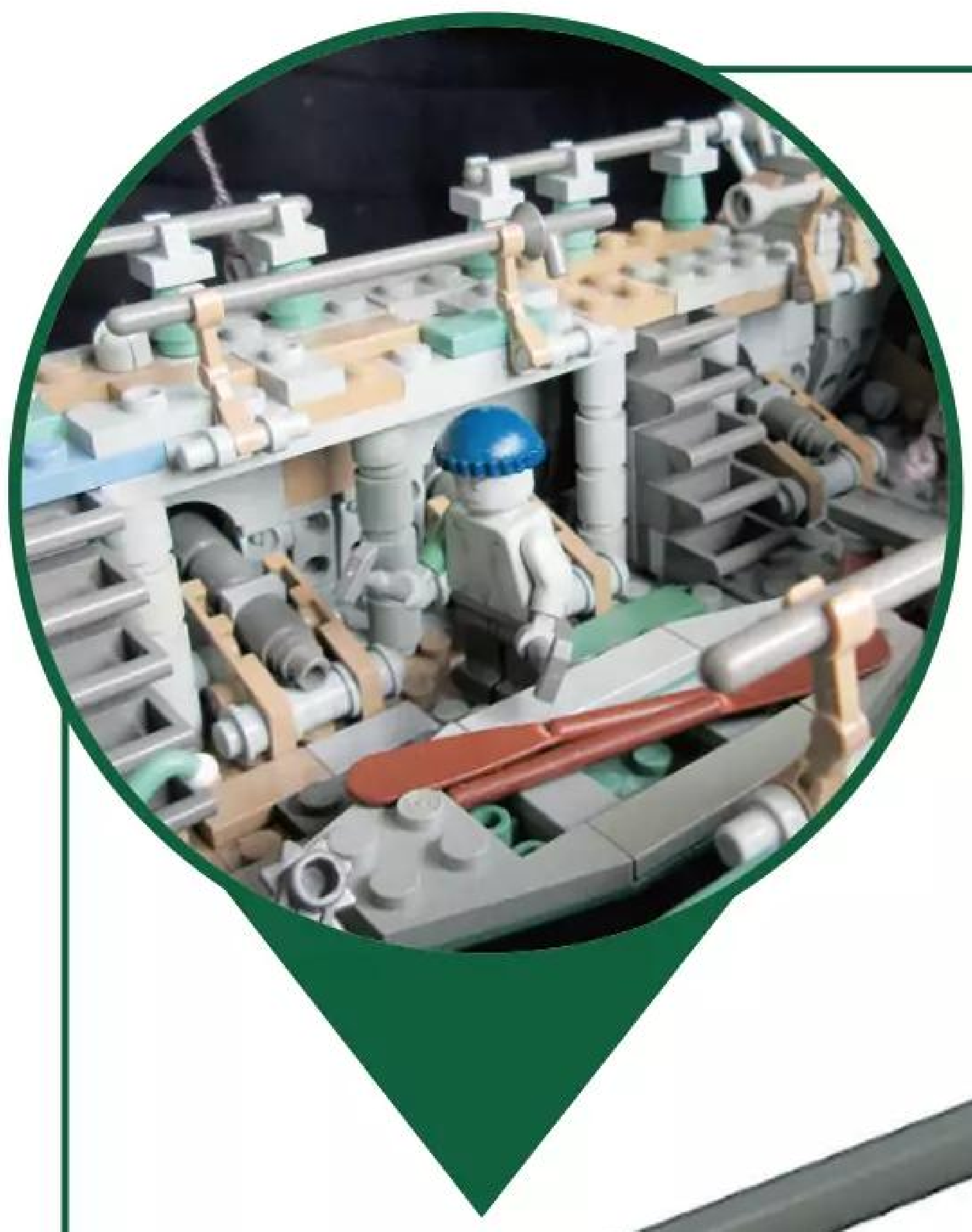
Part: *1x8 Plate*
Bricklink Name: *Plate 1 x 8*
ID: *3460*

Many MOCs try to hide studs — Stefan's Flying Dutchman embraces them, using 1x8 plates for decoration and texture.

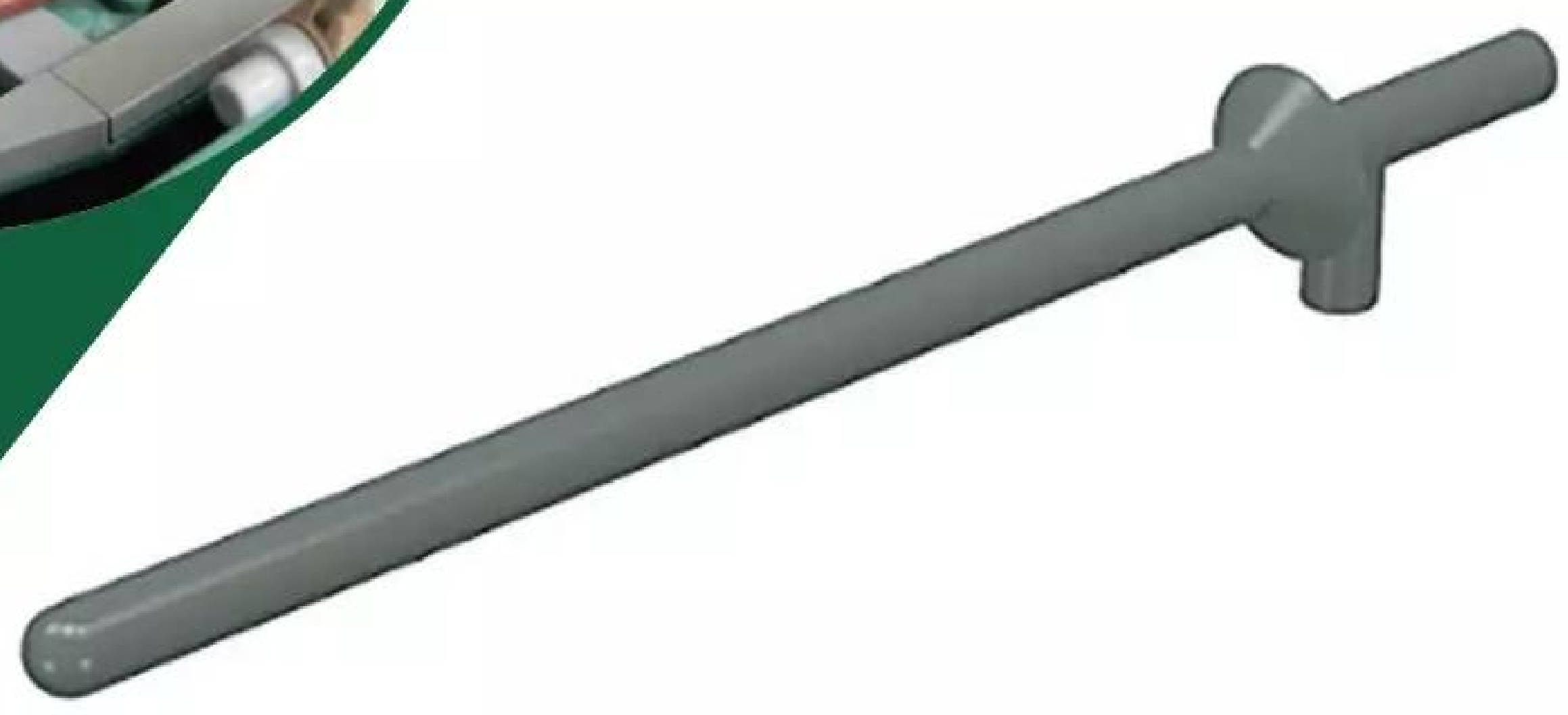


Part: *Flipper*
Bricklink Name: *Minifigure Footgear Flipper*
ID: *10190*

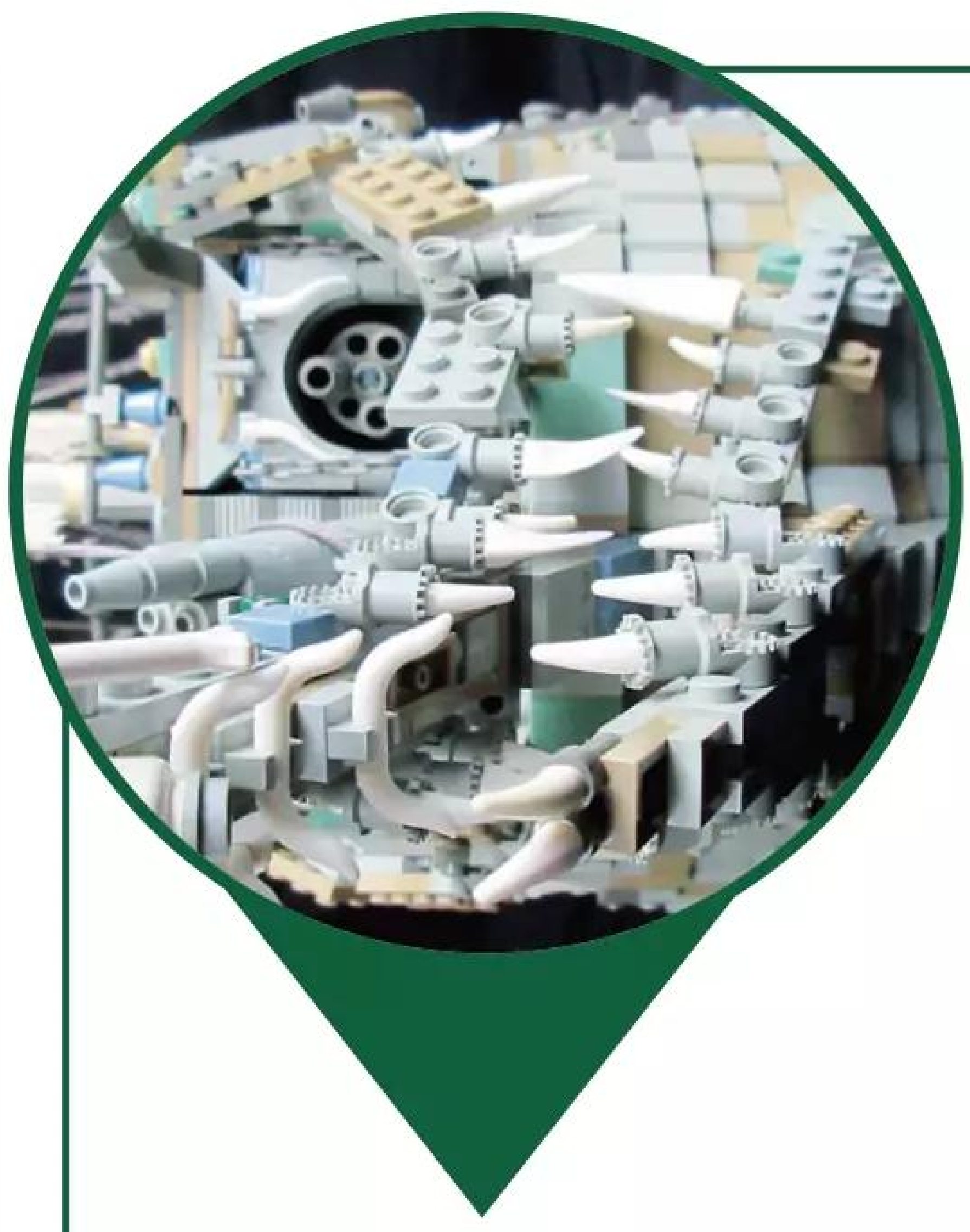
Sometimes using a relatively rare colour, like old light grey, can inspire a creative use of odd parts. Here, Stefan uses flippers to great effect, giving the impression of portholes beneath.



Part: *Lance*
Bricklink Name: *Minifigure, Weapon Lance*
ID: *3849*

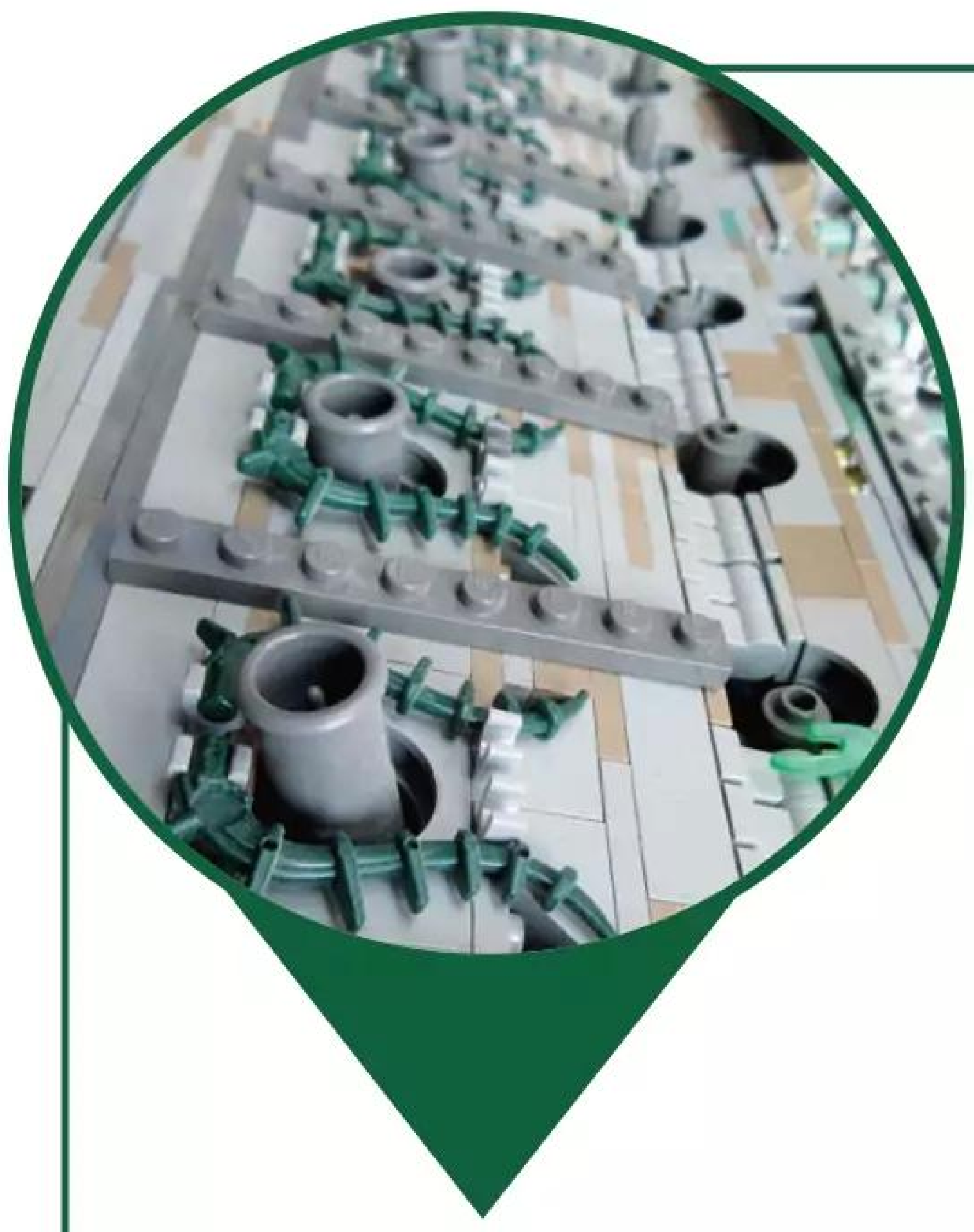


Longer than most bar elements, these lances make effective railing to keep sailors from tumbling from one deck to the next.



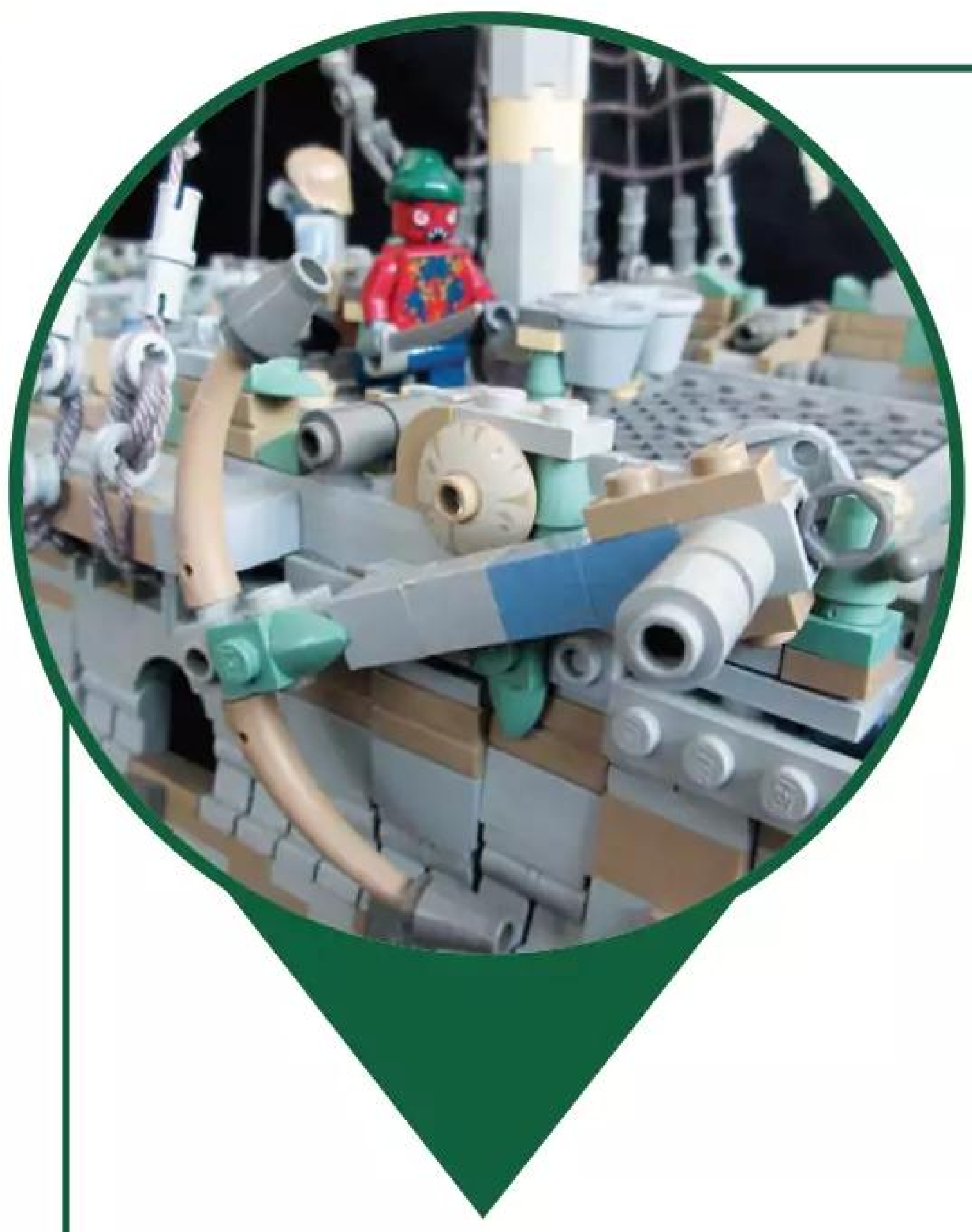
Part: *Technic Connector*
Bricklink Name: *Technic, Axle and Pin Connector Toggle Joint Toothed*
ID: *4273*

These old-school Technic connectors, with their ridged edges, are perfect for holding teeth in place.



Part: *Vine*
Bricklink Name: *Plant Vine Seaweed - Flexible Rubber*
ID: *55236*

The classic vine element adds colour to the ship's sides and highlights its threatening gunports.



Part: *Mushroom*
Bricklink Name: *Dish 2 x 2 Inverted (Radar) with Mushroom Tan Pattern*
ID: *4740pb009*

This mushroom print may not be cheap on the secondary market, but it is spot on for the fungi-covered sides of the Flying Dutchman. ■

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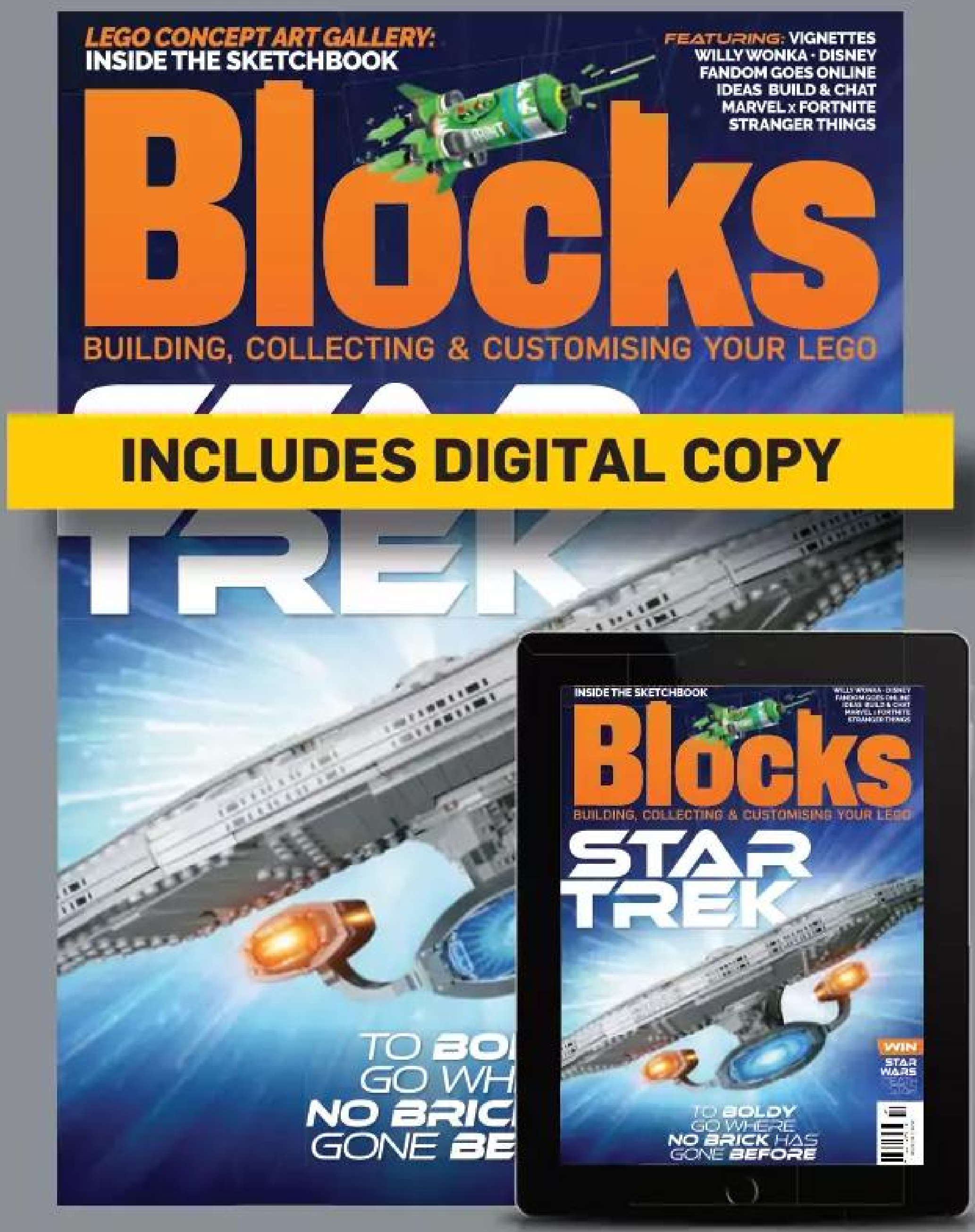

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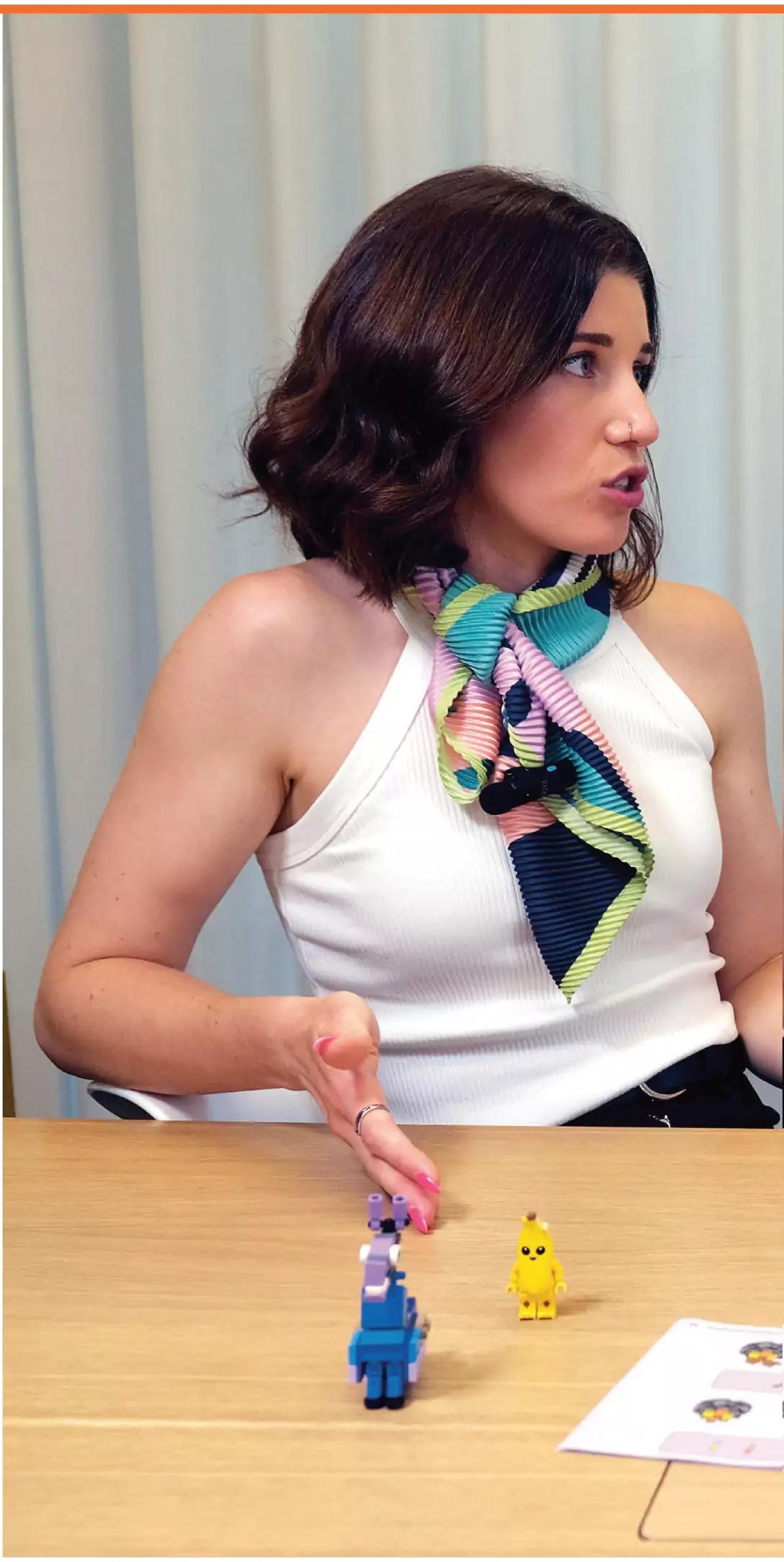
Build & Chat with...

LAURA PERRON

Senior Model Designer Laura Perron talks to Blocks Editor Graham E. Hancock about getting to work on everything from Twilight to Willy Wonka in LEGO Ideas – and keeping the biggest secret in Billund

> "I love the variety of the models in the portfolio because there really is something for everyone."



As Senior Model Designer Laura Perron builds 77075 Peely & Sparkplug's Camp with Blocks, she discusses the many fan-favourite movies she has adapted as LEGO sets during her time as part of the Ideas team. The broad-ranging conversation also touches on her approach to working with fan designers, what it's like to move from designing 18+ models to 4+ models and having responsibility for keeping the LEGO Group's biggest secret.

Graham E. Hancock: You are the only person so far who has come back for a second Build and Chat, so it's a good job you're so prolific! We talked about your education and early career before, so I'd love to pick up where we left off and discuss your work on LEGO Ideas, starting with 21346 Family Tree.

Did you get involved with that set when you were still attached to another theme or had you moved over to Ideas already by then?

Laura Perron: The timing of the model meant that the LEGO Ideas team was an official team. Before that point, I think this was around 2022, it was usually the creative lead of the project who would find people who were passionate about the concept, then they would do it on the side.

I was still on the DOTS project but was really passionate about The Office, so that is how I got to work on that one. Chris [Perron, Laura's husband and also a model designer] and I were still on our main projects, but we did that on the side. Around 2022, they put together a team specifically for Ideas. The Family Tree was my first project as a permanent member of that team, but not my first Ideas project.

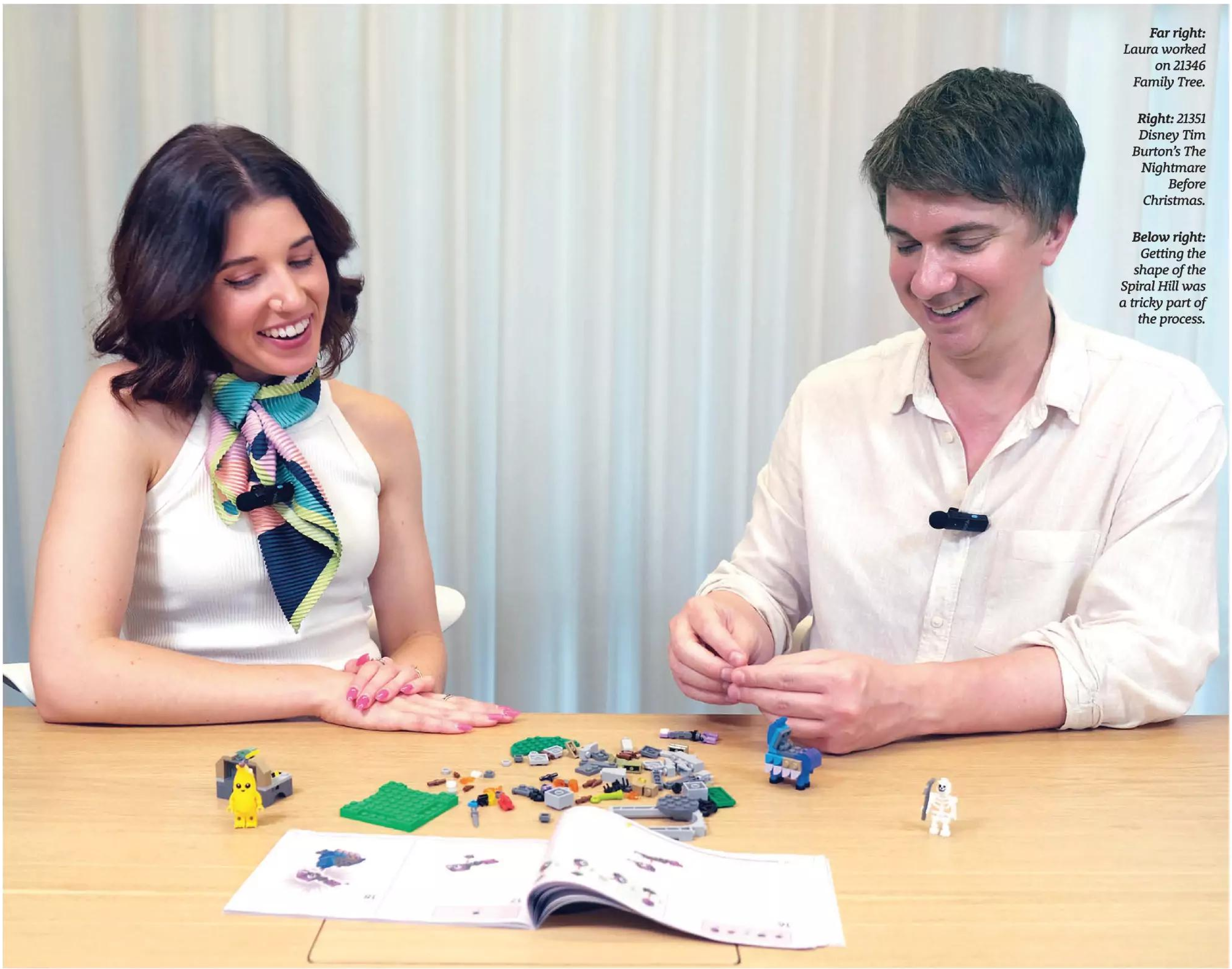
Graham: How did that project differ to the other models you had worked on, both inside and outside of LEGO Ideas?

Laura: LEGO Ideas is really interesting. For example, we don't have what we call a concept phase. Right now, it's August and we are all building at pace, creating concepts for what is going to be in the future portfolio. Then it goes through a funnel process where we present our concepts and then the leadership team chooses which models to continue and which not to. That is typical of most projects.

My first three years on DOTS was solely concept work. Coming to Ideas, we have the brief already, we have the fan submission. Our concept phase is completely different because the project is primarily focused on the execution of the product to market.

Graham: Taking the Family Tree as an example, where do you start with an Ideas model?

Laura: First and foremost, we look at what has been submitted. Is it a digital model or a photo of a model? We take in all of the details and



Far right: *Laura worked on 21346 Family Tree.*

Right: *21351 Disney Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas.*

Below right: *Getting the shape of the Spiral Hill was a tricky part of the process.*

then we have to assess why people voted for this idea, for it to get 10,000 votes, then pass through the internal review system.

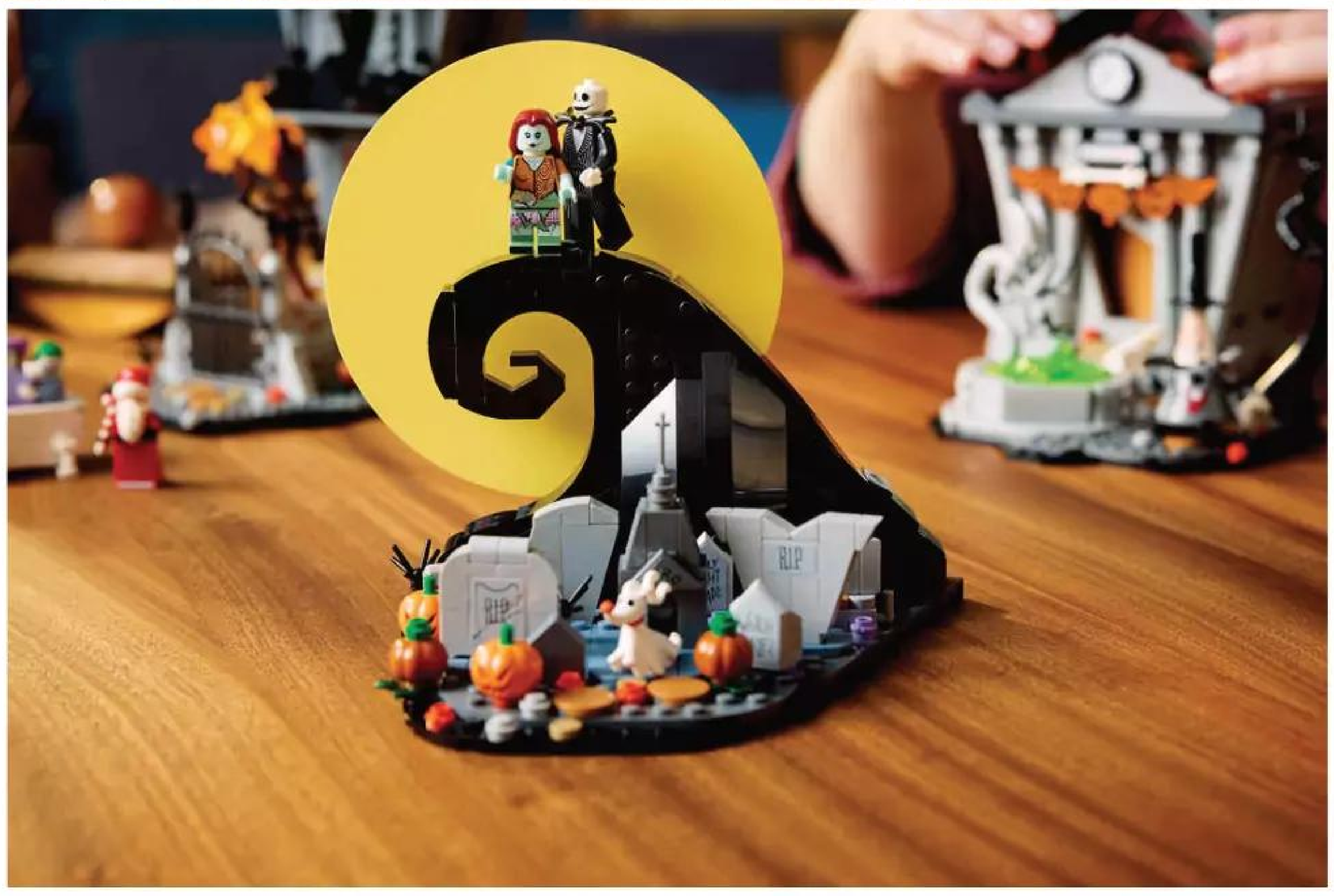
The first question is – what is drawing people to this LEGO set? Then it's working out why this is the one we need to make. By understanding the heart of the project, you get the foundation, then you go from there. For something like the Family Tree, which isn't rooted in a TV show or movie, that process becomes especially important. Why did Ivan [Guerrero, the fan designer] submit this? What matters to him as a fan designer? How can we bring those aspects to life for the market?

Graham: Do you talk to the fan designer at the beginning or do you produce a concept model and then present it to them?

Laura: We usually take a first go because sometimes right away we have visibility over what parts are currently available in the portfolio. Sometimes, if there is a specific part they have included in their submission, we know we can't use it or we might have an alternative solution that the fans don't know about. That is why we like to have a first go so that we can assess everything; we might have to tweak it, but that gives us more of a first draft.

Then it is having a conversation with the fan designer, and we can hit the ground running and say, 'okay, what do you think about if we pivot to using these pieces?' With the Family Tree, the concept stayed the same, having a black tree with red leaves, but we did change the base because we knew that we could make it a bit more efficient with the bricks. Then we tweaked the colours to compensate for the red.

We have regular check-ins with the designer to show them the process – this is their baby and we want to make sure that we're doing them



> “We have regular check ins with the fan designer to show them the process.”

proud whilst fulfilling their dream.

Graham: Compared to other projects, is Ideas quite a quick design process? Do you get through the design phases quicker than you would on something else?

Laura: To be honest, I think it’s the same. We determine the length of time that you have to mature a project by the size. A $200 retail price is going to have similar timelines if it’s Ideas or Icons, for example.

Graham: What was your favourite thing about working on the Family Tree?

Laura: Working on the Family Tree was a big deal for me because I was on LEGO DOTS for five years, the first years of my LEGO design journey. I have such a deep love for that project and I am eternally grateful to it, but I had the itch that I wanted to do more and build to a higher age mark with more complicated builds.

With the Family Tree, I moved to teens, and aside from The Office, this was my first project stepping into that age range. It was really cool because it did just feel like an adult DOTS project – it’s a display piece that you’re adding photos to and customising. The minifigure accessory assortment means you can customise it to what your family is and what that means to you. It was really lovely to transition to adult products through the Family Tree.

Graham: Ideas must be quite an exciting theme to join because you know it’s always going to be something different.

Laura: It’s really interesting because we never know what is coming up. We see in real time what is getting votes like everyone else; we cheer them on and hope certain models get picked. It’s exciting and a very cool project to be a part of.

Graham: Then you moved onto 21351 Disney Tim Burton’s The Nightmare Before Christmas? Did you have any personal relationship with the film and what were the first conversations you had when you found out you were working on that model?

Laura: I love Halloween so much and the world of Tim Burton is so imaginative and visually stylised. It’s such a unique visual to watch. Then I’m also just a huge Disney fan in general. That’s my connection to it.

[Designer Manager] César [Soares] is the biggest Nightmare Before Christmas fan I’ve ever met and he’d been wanting to do a set based off the film for a long time. When this set started coming around, we knew we had to involve him in the project. It is an example of where, although I was on the Ideas team as a permanent resource, he was still on Star Wars but had an equal part in the model’s design. It was really great for both of us because he had a much deeper knowledge of the movie than I did, so we worked together really well.

Graham: The collaborative element of the work must be really enjoyable – what approach did you and César take?

Laura: It depends on the designer you work with – everyone is a bit different. For us, it made sense because there are three main sections of the set for him to focus primarily on one chunk of the build. Because we’re so into all the details, it’s nice to keep a chunk personally. There’s lots of decisions that go into a model, you change a brick here and now want to make it all more efficient, so it made sense to divvy it up that way. But we would work on our sections and then we would meet up and agree what was working and what needed changing and tweaking.

Graham: You’ve mentioned how much you both loved the film. When you’re working with material you’re passionate about, is it hard to temper your excitement? Do you ever try to limit how many deep cuts or easter eggs you add in?

Laura: Aside from a model being physically too big, I don’t think there’s ever too much detail we can put into the design. This is going to a specific fanbase and, more widely, a group of people who love the property. We know that if we put a really obscure easter egg in there, there’s going to be somebody who deeply appreciates that. I think the more details, the better.

César isn’t the only one who loves Nightmare Before Christmas and if I know other people are fans, I like for them to tell me what should be in the LEGO set. That’s the nature of design – we’re always asking, ‘how can this be better?’ and ‘how can we make this even more specific to the franchise?’

Graham: Can you talk a little about creating the challenging shape of Spiral Hill? It has such an iconic design that’s not just in the movie but it was on all of the marketing materials, it’s almost the symbol of the film.

Laura: It’s a completely smooth cone that comes to a point, so we were thinking about how to deliver that. I tried different designs, some that were much thicker, but the silhouette is the most important part. We had to ask if filling it out with bricks on either side was the best way forward when we can get the same effect with more of a silhouette, which means we can use the bricks for other details. That was a decision we had to make. I made lots of different versions of Spiral Hill.

Then, like every design process, I could make the shape, but is it strong? Can we put it in the building instructions or does it require three hands? But for a strong product, it's thinking about how it balances. For the moon, we did try a brick-built version, but it wasn't good, so we put the foil moon in. Again, it comes back to the film's poster, which has the crisp moon in contrast to the black hill and so it was working out how to deliver that. I think we had a good solution in the end.

Graham: Are there ever situations where, because of the way your design has captured a tricky look, you maybe accept some fragility? How do you make that compromise?

Laura: So where do we toe the line?

Graham: Exactly – can you sometimes accept that the solution is good enough to use in the final model, even if it asks a bit too much of the builder?

Laura: I think it really depends on the context. There are some things where maybe the connection isn't as strong as we want it to be, but then we ask who the intended audience is. If it's adults, then, depending on the context, maybe they can put a brick back if it falls off. But in 4+, that's a harder conversation to have; kids either press too hard or not hard enough. Sometimes a technique might look better, but the kids are destroying the set and not in a fun way, so we've got to build a certain part of the model up.

> "I managed to keep it secret for an entire year, even from my husband."

A lot of it depends on who the model is for. I love the variety of the models in the portfolio because there really is something for everyone. If you want to bash a function over and over again, there are sets for you; if you're primarily focused on details or some ornate building, again we've got something for you.

Graham: Let's move onto 21354 Twilight The Cullen House – how did that one begin?

Laura: The Twilight Cullen House is a perfect example of where I saw it gaining traction – it was the fastest to hit 10,000 votes on the Ideas platform in, I think, under 48 hours. I was surprised like a lot of people and then began to think, 'could this happen?' I didn't know if the LEGO Group would go for it, but I knew if they did, I really wanted to be a part of it because I am a huge Twilight fan.

But it is funny because I had to actively remind myself that I knew the film and could do the set – I feel like I suppressed my love for Twilight over the years, but then I started to unearth all of my teenage memories. I had the poster in my bedroom – I was and am a huge fan of the movies. I have a small box of mementos that I brought over to Denmark when I moved – just little tickets and things, and I have some Twilight stuff in there. I brought my ticket stub from when I saw the first movie in 2008 to Denmark. So, I really hoped that I got to work on that model.

Graham: There are some things that you remember you loved as a kid, but other things can drift in and out of your memory until something sparks that passion again.

Laura: I saw online the idea that now your thirties are for getting back into the weird stuff you were into as a teenager. I'm 100% feeling that – give me all the Twilight and anime… I'm in, let's go.

Graham: How intentional was it to create a model that appealed not only to Twilight fans but also to people who just like big, beautiful LEGO buildings?

Laura: That was a big push from the team and especially from me because I remember that when Twilight was popular, it was cool for some people to hate on it. I'm fully aware of that. But that is the beauty of Ideas – we are catering to a specific group of people who are passionate about this and it is their support that means we can even talk about doing a Twilight set. It was, first and foremost, really important that we were satisfying the Twilight fans – that is who this is for.

But then it's a beautiful piece of modern architecture, so it was a two-in-one – if you don't love Twilight, that's fine and you live your life, but this was a nice opportunity to bring a piece of modern architecture to the portfolio. My goal was to hit both of those points.

Graham: Did that also impact how you thought about the scale of the house? It feels similar to the scale of some of the Icons buildings, just with a quite unique style that is square and modern.

Laura: It's all in one package. The footprint that Nick [Micheels, the fan designer] had done was quite square; especially for adult products, a lot of the time we are thinking about how people will display a set on a shelf. Shelves have specific dimensions, so we try to keep it to display size so it can fit nicely.

But it depends on the product – I know [10316] Rivendell doesn't necessarily fit on a shelf, but the rectangular shape of this house meant it would be a perfect display piece. We took Nick's idea and concept and just tweaked it to put more bricks in and add more details to the house, not necessarily the surrounding grounds. It's about selling the scene – how much do you need outside versus inside? For this one especially, it was all about the details and how many easter eggs we could fit inside.

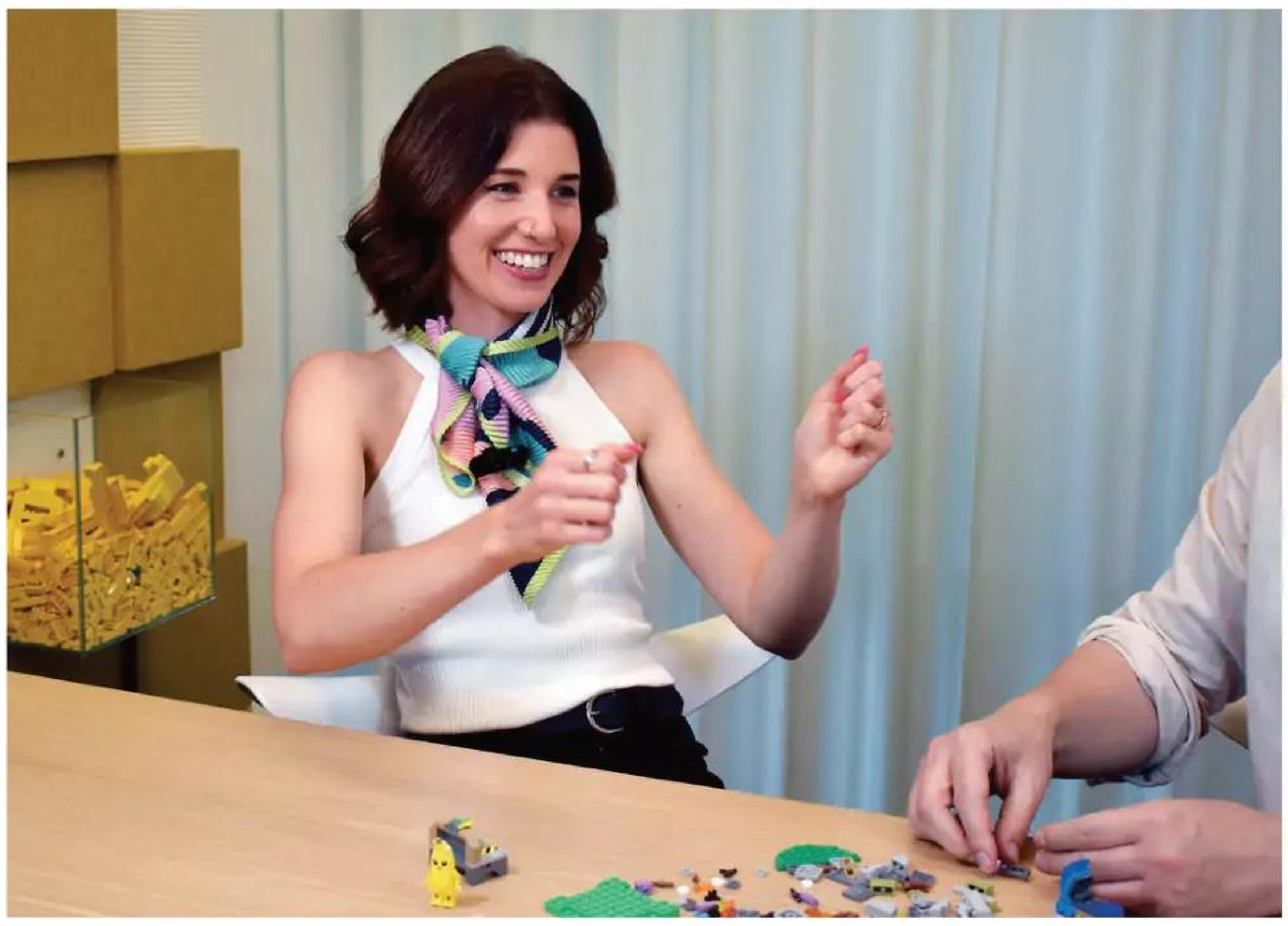
Graham: Do you have a favourite bit of furniture or a detail that you added?

Laura: I have a few favourites in that one. I really like how the white cushioned day bed in Edward's room turned out. It's a very simple build, but that's the beauty of modern furniture – it is sleek and beautiful in its simplicity. I love that one.

Another favourite is in the record shelf; there is a sticker that says 'Yoghurt Funny' on it. It's wonderfully strange, but it was a direct request from Stephanie Meyer, the author of the Twilight books. The team over at Lionsgate told us the request and we were happy to put it in. I don't

Laura collaborated with colleagues on the 2023 employee Christmas gift set, 4002023 Gingerbread House.

LEGO
10+
4002023
1464
pcs/pzs
Building Toy
Bauspielzeug
Jouet de construction
Giocattolo da costruzione
Juguete de construcción
Brinquedo para Construir
拼搭玩具
Zabawka konstrukcyjna
Stavebnicová hračka
Építőjáték
Jucărie de construcție
Играчка за построяване
Būvējama rotaļlieta
Ehitusmänguasi
Konstruktorius



fully understand what it means, but it means something to her family, so I love it.

Graham: It's cool that she's involved in the process.

Laura: It's different for every franchise, but it was cool she wanted to be a part of it. To have that ownership makes for a better end result. She's the creator. With the fan designers too, we want them to be close and involved in the process so that they're a part of it.

Graham: Even if it's an obscure reference that very few people know what it means, she's got a direct input into the model; there's something super special about the originator of the story being involved.

So moving away from Ideas for a little while, how did you get to work on the 2023 employee gift, 4002023 Gingerbread House? That is so fun and different.

Laura: That team is very secretive. We have a lot of secrets in this building, but that team is even more secretive.

Graham: They keep secrets from the secret keepers?

Laura: Yeah. [Laughs] I was just sitting in my area one day and Maarten Simons, who was the Creative Lead of the Christmas project, but I didn't know he was the lead of the holiday gift, just came up to me one day and asked to talk. I thought something was terribly wrong, but he asked me if I was interested in joining the team.

I think part of that was because [Senior Designer] Markus [Rollbühler], who was on the team, maybe put my name forward as someone who could be interested. That's how it happened – they pulled me aside and asked if I wanted to work on it. My pride and joy, actually, is that I managed to keep it secret for an entire year, even from my husband Chris. He had no idea.

Graham: So you'd go home and just say you had a quiet day in the

office?

Laura: I was working late a lot because we didn't want other people to see our screens. I think he just thought I was bad at managing my time! But then I managed to get an early copy because we wanted to bring it to Canada that year for the holidays and give it to my mother-in-law. When I brought it to my house, I said, "by the way," produced the box and it blew his mind.

Graham: How did you split the responsibilities with the other designers on that model?

Laura: Because it's a secret project and we're working on it outside of our regular projects, there was a few designers involved. Primarily towards the end it was me, [Designer] Leon [Pijnenburg] and Markus. The three of us were, I think, working the most on it, and we would just pass it back and forth. How it works is you create different concepts that are then presented to the CEO – I didn't present them, but they are delivered on a platter and they choose which one they want. Then it was still Kjeld [Kirk Kristiansen, grandson of the LEGO Group founder Ole Kirk Christiansen], so it was his choice.

Graham: You can have on your resume that the owner of the company approved a model you worked on – that's pretty exciting.

Laura: He picked the direction, then it was a matter of who had time depending on the timeline. Sometimes it would be me, sometimes Markus, sometimes Leon. There was a lot to that build. I worked primarily on the builds of the houses themselves, and Markus and Leon did a lot of work on the mini builds.

Graham: That set is a gingerbread street with four gingerbread buildings, the front is decorated with candy colours in a DOTS style. In the back it's an advent calendar with lots of little builds.

Laura: We wanted something that people could hopefully turn into a tradition of rebuilding every year.

Graham: What was the thinking behind the minifigures in that set? They seemed to represent certain people?

Laura: I'm wracking my brain, but we definitely wanted to tie it to the history of the company. There were talks that this could be the last holiday present that Kjeld would be a part of because he was retiring, so we wanted to tie it to him and commemorate him. But actually, he didn't want us to focus on him – he's very humble and I respect that. But that's where the root of the minifigures came from – we wanted to tie it to the founding family.

Graham: I remember the first minifigure is a carpenter, so you can see the connection there immediately.

Laura: The graphics and minifigures were done by [Senior Graphic Designer] Crystal [Fontan].

Graham: Mostly recently you worked on Willy Wonka. When you were talking about Twilight, it reminded me that it was only when the Willy Wonka set was announced that I recalled how much I loved Roald Dahl as a kid. Did you watch that model head towards 10,000 votes or did it appear on your desk as a surprise one day?

Laura: There's never one that comes as a big surprise because we all keep tabs on what's gaining votes. Plus [LEGO Ideas Creative Lead] Jordan [Scott] is always telling us and will give us a big list of what could be potential projects. A lot of it comes down to timing for designer time as to whether I work on a project or someone else.

I'm really happy it lined up that I could work on that one, because my connection to the world of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory is that I saw the play as a kid when our local high school put on a production and we had a field trip to see it. I remember it was so cool, I loved the play. I went to the same high school and was in the theatre programme, which was my first step into design because we were designing theatre sets. When I was starting university, I was unsure if I should study theatre design or fine arts because I didn't know industrial design was a thing. I chose fine arts, which led into industrial design as a career… but I had a little connection to the material.

Graham: It's lovely you have such a distinct memory of the impact that show had on you as a child.

Laura: Yes, but then also who doesn't love candy and chocolate?

Graham: It's everyone's dream, right, to go into the chocolate factory where everything's edible? There's a reason that story resonates.

Laura: I was really excited to play with all of the colours and the deliciousness of the set. Plus, with all the ornate details, it was a really fun project to be a part of.

Graham: It's great that you managed to get the boat in with the

Above left: 21360 Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory.

Above right: Laura filled 21360 with all of the brick-built confectionary she could.

Right: 21354 Twilight The Cullen House.

Far right: Stephanie Meyer requested a specific easter egg for the set.

“We know that if we put a really obscure easter egg in there, there’s going to be somebody who deeply appreciates that.”

environment and chocolate river around. How did you come up with the model’s scale?

Laura: When the concept was approved, we knew we would work with Warner Bros and right away we had to choose which movie to focus on. There were a lot of players at hand because Roberto [Ceruti] and Jodi [Padulano, the fan designers] made a beautiful homage to all the versions, but in talking to the partner we decided on the 1971 Gene Wilder version.

My first layout of the model was very linear, it had a similar footprint to the Twilight model because I’d just come off that. But it felt a bit flat and rectangular, we wanted the bridge and the chocolate fall. The pathways to the Chocolate Room are so winding, so we wanted that dynamic nature. We then started playing with a boomerang shape, a bit like an elbow, which right away felt much more interesting. Then we had the bridge and the chocolate fall, but the bridge created a big negative space gap. We thought then that having the Wonkatania would be amazing and early on we thought it would fit in a model of this size. We went for it and Markus designed the boat – he absolutely nailed it.

Graham: Am I right in thinking all of the characters can fit inside the boat?

Laura: Except for Augustus. That was a decision because we wanted a specific width to the boat – we didn’t want it too wide, but we planned out where everyone would sit with an Oompa Loompa steering. You always have to go back to the reference material and Augustus is up a tube at that point, he’s gone, so he doesn’t get a seat.

Graham: Did you have to adjust the model to make sure it could fit along the river?

Laura: I think the boat came a bit later while we were still establishing the river – we wanted it to be as wide as possible without it feeling too wide. We had a long, twelve-stud arch on top that made it a pretty set unit, so it felt like an appropriate scale in the composition. Markus went back and forth trying boats of different sizes, but I think he made the perfect boat.

Graham: Did you have lots of different versions of the chocolate fall? What was the design process in getting that right?

Laura: That was pretty quick, to be honest, because we wanted to make a belt that worked, we have one element and gear wheel that’s perfect for it. That decided the scale of the movement, then it was a matter of working out how tall the chocolate fall would be.

I did have a version with bigger tubes so you could put Augustus in there, but it was too big and in a terrible scale to everything. It was funny, but it dominated the whole thing.

Graham: So, now you work on 4+ models – is it an adjustment to come from 18+, the highest age mark, right down to 4+?

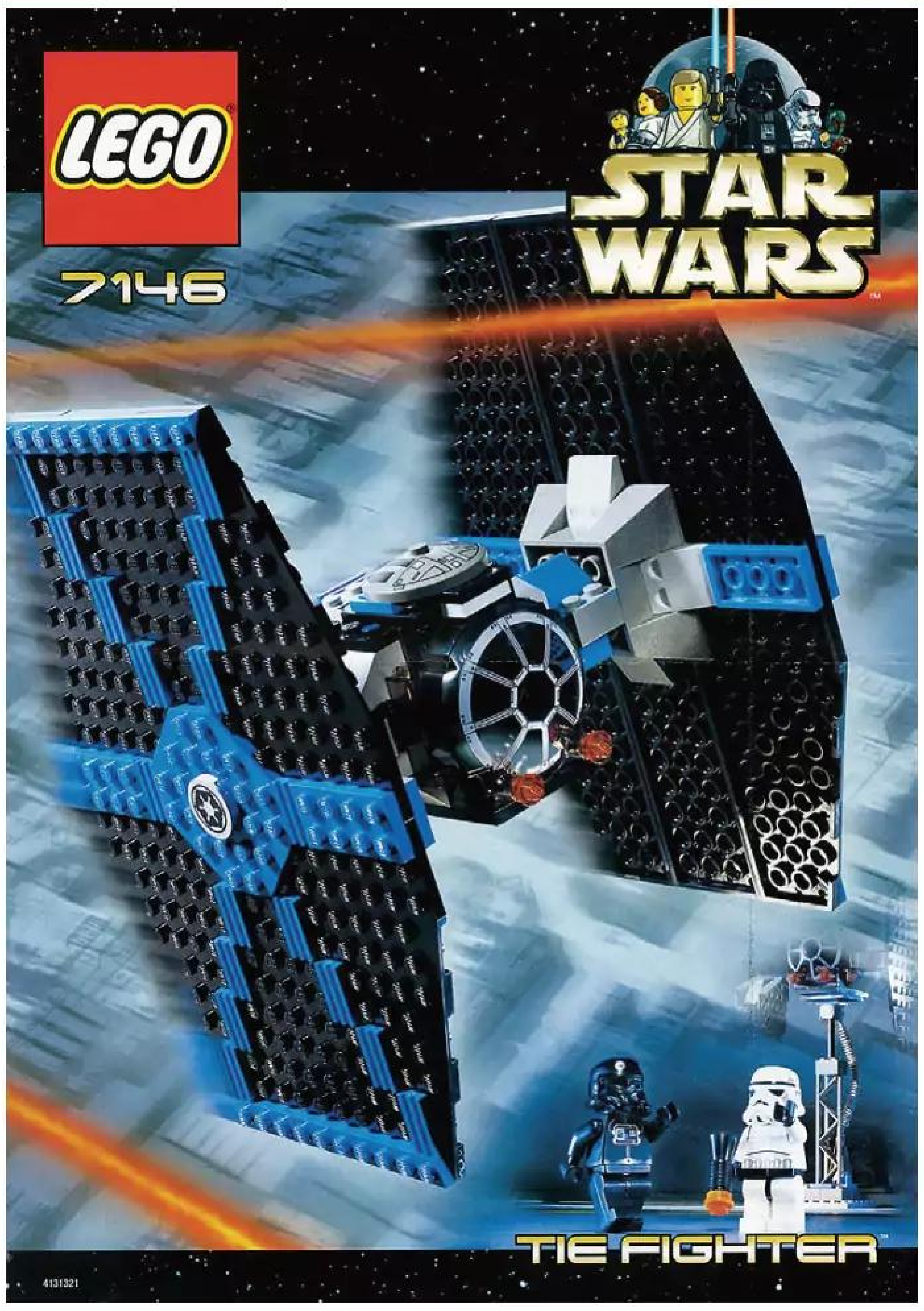
Laura: The Charlie and the Chocolate Factory model is my last Ideas set for now, but coming off that 2,000-piece model to a 4+ focus is… different. But it is really interesting because the design process is the same. We have a target audience, we have certain goals we want to achieve and we have the brief. As designers, it is our job to understand the consumer and work out how to build something that fulfils the brief.

The design process is the same, but there are a lot of things that make 4+ a really interesting project. The world needs to know more about it because, for example, there are no stickers and there are no more than 60 elements per bag.

In other projects, we will typically look at the bag one at a time, breaking down the contents to make sure there are not too many conflicting parts. In 4+, we have to look at the whole volume because kids will just open up all the bags and don’t care. With locking bricks, we try not to lock three bricks at a time. There are all these interesting considerations for that age group – it’s really cool. ■

2001

FOR UNDER £20 YOU COULD BUY...



7146 TIE FIGHTER

TIE Fighters are so ubiquitous in LEGO Star Wars these days that nobody could blame you for assuming that one must have been among that initial launch line-up in 1999. But it actually took two years for the first Imperial starfighter to hit shelves, arriving in a toyetic (if not entirely accurate) black and bright blue colour scheme, with flat – but crucially not parts-intensive – wings that pinged off if you so much as glanced at them. It might be even more difficult to believe that this was also the first appearance of the LEGO Stormtrooper...

FOR UNDER £50 YOU COULD BUY...

LEGO
Alpha Team
AGES/EDADES 8-12
Ogel Control Center
6776

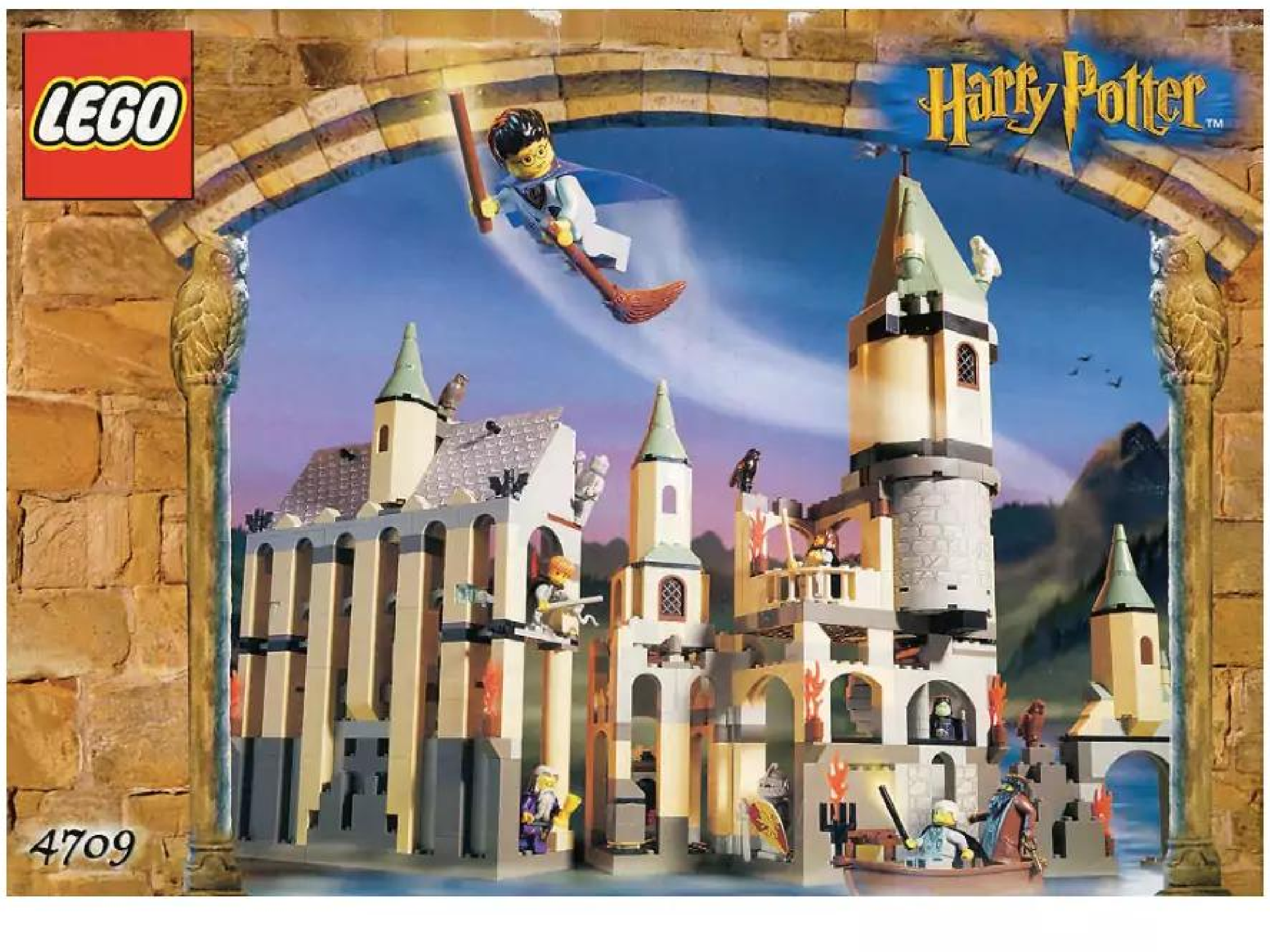
6776 OGEL CONTROL CENTRE

What could be more evil than a baddie whose name is literally LEGO spelled backwards? That was the premise of Alpha Team, a sort of early precursor to Agents (and later Ultra Agents) that hit shelves in 2001, championed by 6776 Ogel Control Centre. This was the first wave's only location-based playset and even then a good chunk of its piece count goes into the rocket that sits on its raised baseplate. But it's the towering structure behind it where Ogel's lair really shines, dressed in red and black and topped off by a giant skull motif. Nothing screams 'bad guy base' like a giant skull.

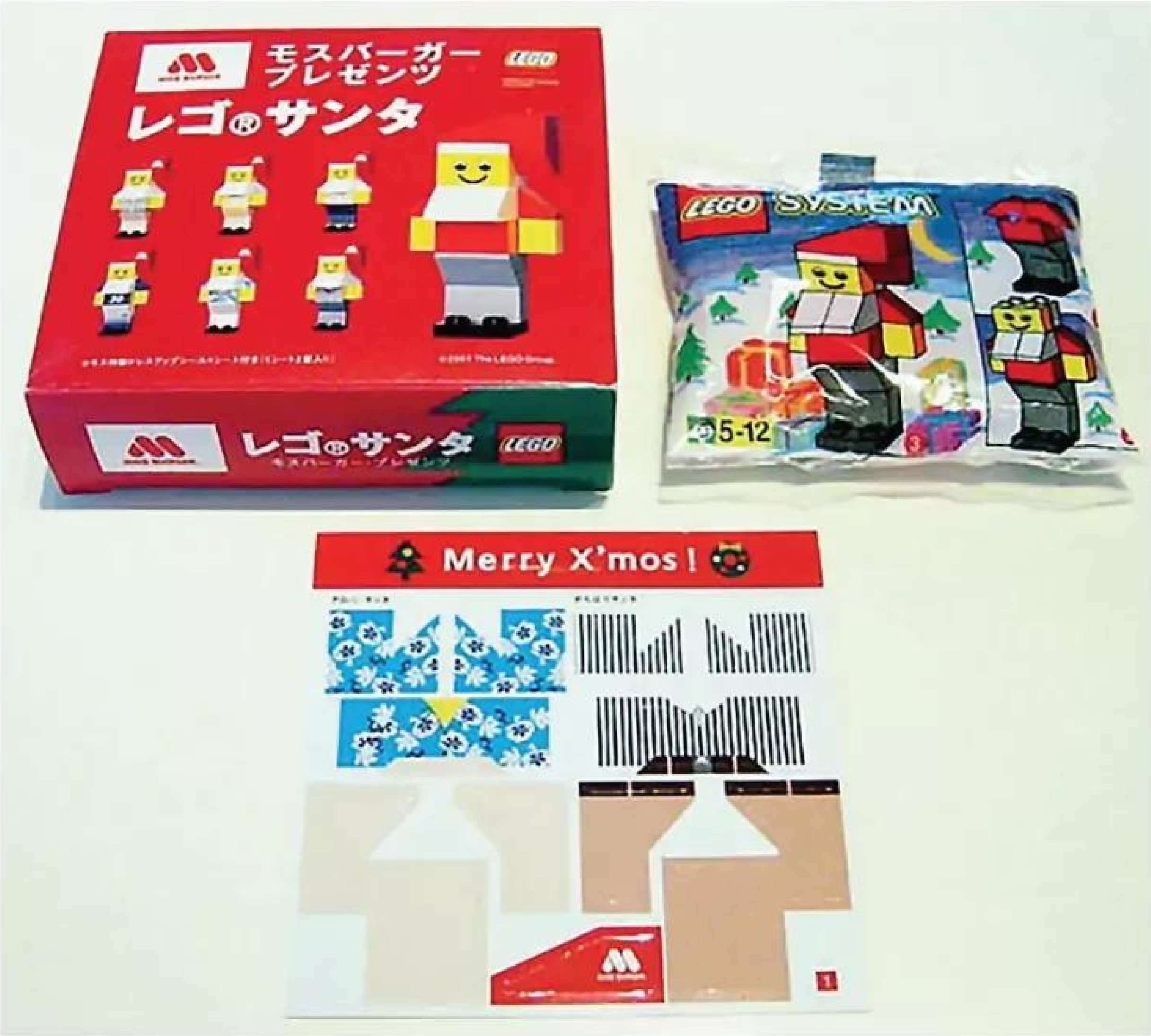
FOR UNDER £100 YOU COULD BUY...

4709 HOGWARTS CASTLE

Modular Hogwarts systems have come and gone over the years, but it all started with 4709 Hogwarts Castle in 2001 – a set that was cut from a different magical cloth to its contemporaries, thanks largely to the fact Pottermania was just beginning to ramp up with the debut of the first movie. This headline Hogwarts build proved to be hot stuff around the holiday season – and by December, no amount of 'Accio LEGO' could conjure one up to pop under the tree. As the New York Times so succinctly put it: "Forget about the Hogwarts Castle from LEGO."



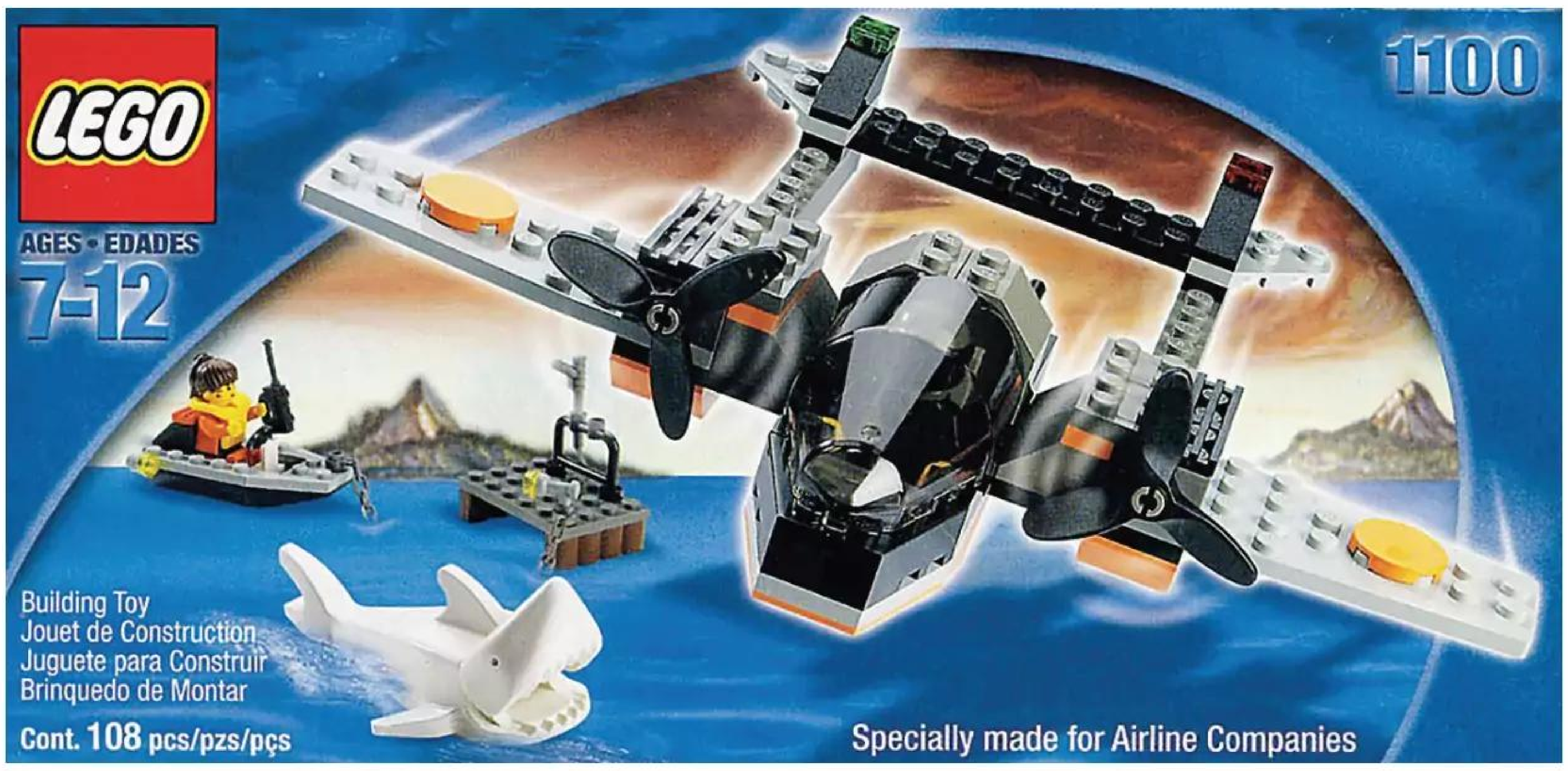
DO YOU WANT FRIES WITH THAT?


モスバーガー
プレゼンツ
レゴ®サンタ
LEGO SYSTEM
5-12
Merry X'mos!

Every now and then a deep dive into the LEGO archives throws up something truly bizarre and you can say that much about the quartet of festive gift boxes that turned up in Mos Burger restaurants in Japan in 2001. Each one included a polybag with a buildable Santa Claus figure, along with a unique sticker sheet to dress him up in an alternative outfit to his usual red and white suit; a Hawaiian shirt, a tuxedo, a football shirt or royal robes. Despite – or perhaps because of – their incredible obscurity, they're actually not too expensive to pick up on the aftermarket.

SWASHBUCKLING IN THE SKY

The LEGO Group has a long history of producing promotional sets specifically for airlines and ferry companies, but they mostly depict run-of-the-mill planes and boats. Not so for 2001's 1100 Sky Pirates, however, which was created for Scandinavian airlines such as SAS and Braathens. The box even proclaims that it's 'specially made for airline companies', which feels a bit like a set depicting a crown jewel heist being 'specially made for the Louvre'. Senior Designer Bjarke Lykke Madsen says this one was based on 1999's 2769 In-flight Jungle Express, only with more modern colours and a new cockpit from LEGO Star Wars.


LEGO
1100
AGES · EDADES
7-12
Building Toy
Jouet de Construction
Juguete para Construir
Brinquedo de Montar
Cont. 108 pcs/pzs/pçs
Specially made for Airline Companies

CONSTRACTION FEVER

It's almost impossible to talk about the state of LEGO in 2001 without mentioning BIONICLE, which debuted that very year with a blockbuster assortment of 17 sets, one collector's pack, six McDonald's polybags, two mask packs and a 'power pack' with a unique silver-coloured mask and CD. Its buildable action figures, multimedia tie-ins and expansive lore saw its original run enjoy great success – it's credited by some with helping the LEGO Group stave off bankruptcy in the early 2000s – and while its second-generation stint in 2015 burned out all too quickly, BIONICLE still has a sizeable cult following to this day.

CHRIS TURNER-WHARFE

Meanwhile, outside the LEGO bubble...

HIGHEST GROSSING MOVIE
HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

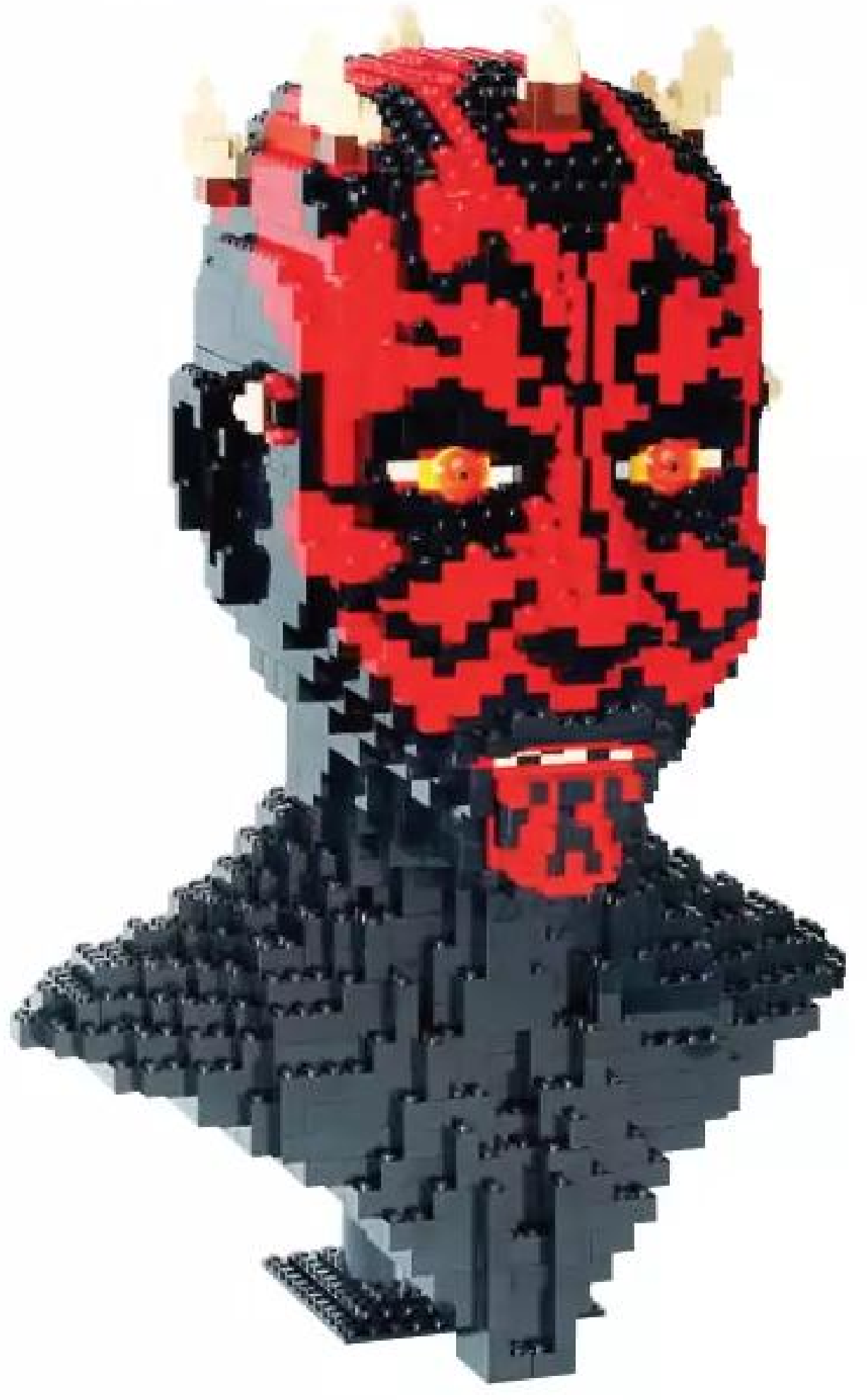
BEST SELLING ALBUM
MISSUNDAZTOOD (PINK)

BEST SELLING GAME
POKÉMON GOLD/SILVER/CRYSTAL

BEST SELLING BOOK
DESECRATION

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE WINNING TEAM
BAYERN MUNICH

Biggest Set

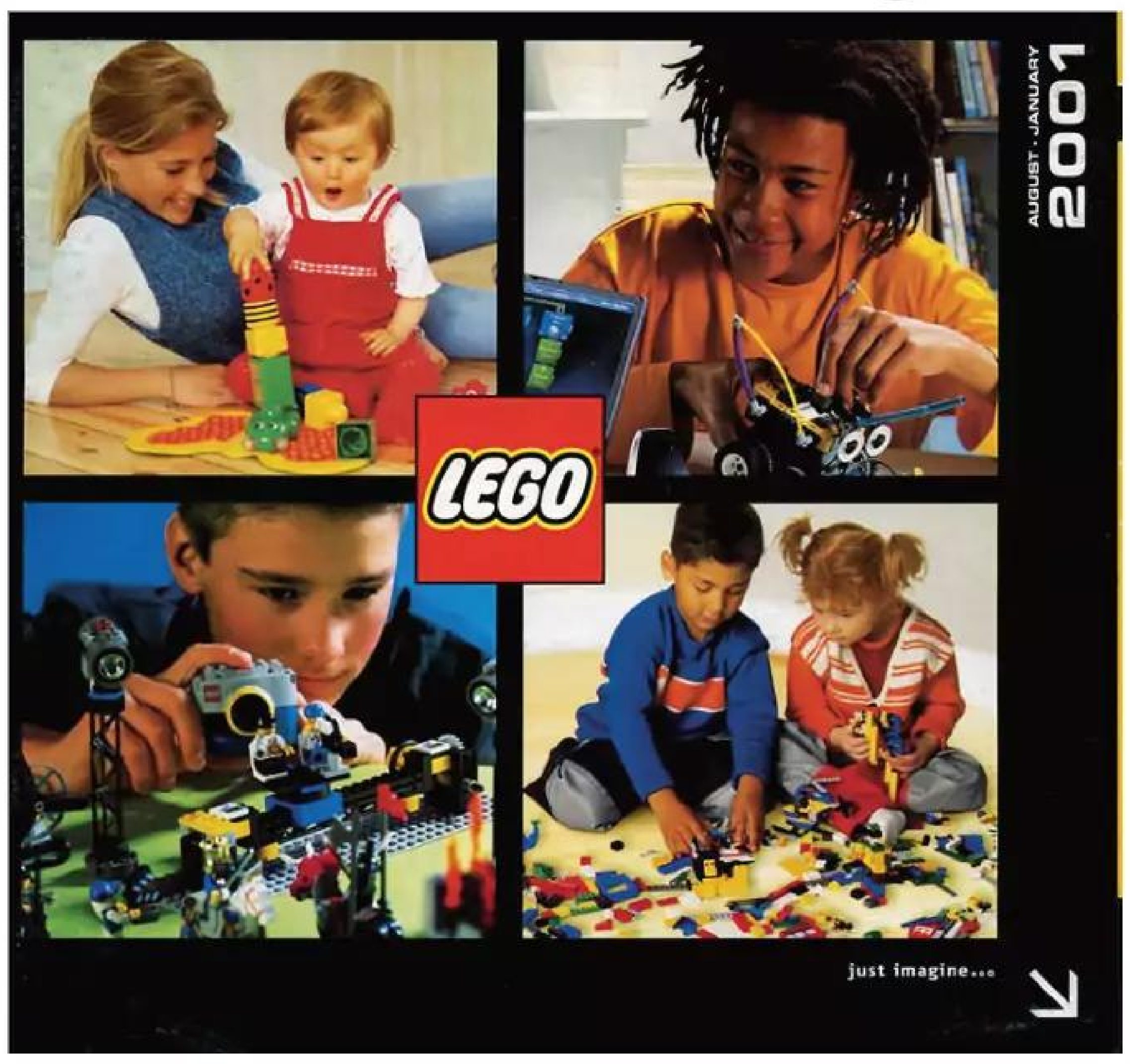


10018 Darth Maul
(1,868 pieces)

410

SETS RELEASED

Classic Catalogue


AUGUST - JANUARY
2001
LEGO
just imagine...

Time Cruising

Travelling back through the years to look at some of the most memorable LEGO items

MINIFIGURE(?)

1989
MONKEY

Is the LEGO monkey a minifigure? This is the existential question of our time. It has regular minifigure arms and hands, so let's say yes, it is. And what a minifigure; first debuting with LEGO Pirates in 1989, this cheeky chimp went on to appear in 38 sets during its 22-year stint in production. And it's not a stretch to say it's now as iconic as Captain Redbeard himself (at least for a sizeable contingent of Pirates veterans).

It's quite remarkable that the primate ever made it into sets at all, as the complexity of assembling the figure tested the LEGO Group's capabilities in the late 1980s.

The original brown version appeared in four different Pirates sets in that initial range, showing up once each in 6260 Shipwreck Island, 6270 Forbidden Island, 6235 Buried Treasure and the classic 6285 Black Seas Barracuda. And while it would go on to feature in Pirates sets first and foremost, the original monkey also made cameos across Town, Paradisa, Belville, Creator and (of course) Time Cruisers, that hodgepodge theme that threw everything at the wall to see what would stick.

As a design it stood the test of time, too, transitioning to reddish brown along with the rest of the portfolio in 2004 – but otherwise remained unchanged, including its unprinted face. Its final appearances came in a handful of Juniors Pirates sets, a random Speed Racer set in 2008, the 2009 Pirates range and 2011's 3853 Banana Balance, a tiny entry in the LEGO Games portfolio that also turned out to be the monkey's last hurrah.

The LEGO Group's primate portfolio today includes a couple of more modernised monkeys, which have traded minifigure limbs for face printing. More accurate? Yes. Less charming? Well... they're certainly not minifigures anymore.

THEME

1993
ICE PLANET 2002

LEGO SYSTEM
6983

Do you remember a time when 2002 seemed like the far-flung future? If so, you were probably enjoying LEGO Space sets in the early 1990s, when the designers were busy trying to convince a generation that interplanetary travel was less than a decade away.

In hindsight, maybe they should have called this particular blue and transparent neon orange fever dream Ice Planet 3002.

In any case, this legendary civilian faction represented a return to the roots of LEGO Space in 1993, shying away from conflict-driven blocs like Blacktron and Spyrius and putting the focus back on research and exploration. That was the driving force behind the sets, at least: LEGO catalogues at the time showed Ice Planet's astronauts defending their base on the freezing planet Krysto from both aforementioned factions, with the help of Space Police II.

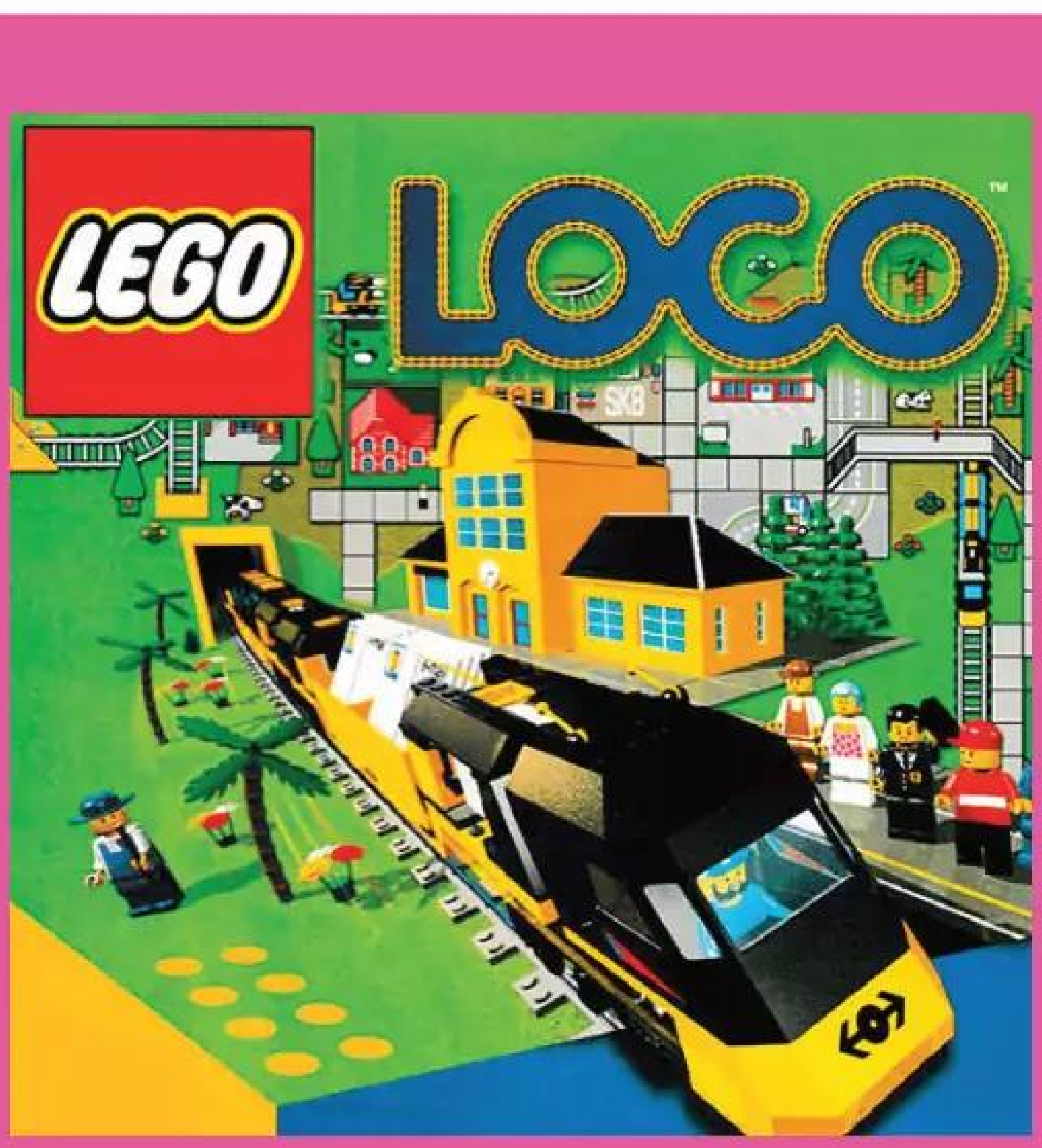
If you only had Ice Planet 2002 sets to play with, though, the chances are you did not feel short-changed. Cool characters like Commander Cold and the revolutionary colour scheme were probably enough to make most kids happy, with a wide selection of pieces available in the faction's signature transparent neon orange hue – including satellite dishes, windshields, helmet visors and, of course, the classic chainsaw.

Like several of the most iconic LEGO Space subthemes, Ice Planet 2002 was pretty short-lived, with all but one of its sets debuting in 1993 (and even that final 1994 effort was a tiny, 47-piece rover).

The LEGO Group later tipped its hat to the range in 2024's space-themed Collectible Minifigures series, with an updated version of what was LEGO Space's first female minifigure, Doctor Kelvin. Yet much like the sadly retired transparent neon orange, the futuristic Ice Planeteers were (ironically) already ancient history by then...

VIDEO GAME

1998
LEGO LOCO



The current video game release calendar is defined by publishers trying to get out of each other's way (or, more accurately, out of the path of Grand Theft Auto VI) so as not to compete for players' attention. That was apparently of little concern to the LEGO Group at the end of the 20th century, as its internal publishing division LEGO Media International's first three video games all debuted on the very same day.

On November 11, 1998, LEGO Loco joined LEGO Creator and LEGO Chess on video game store shelves. Loco was a town-building simulation game anchored around the central concept of rail transport (hence the game's title). The idea evolved from an internal project by developer Intelligent Games, which started with the simple premise of being able to control a character that permanently existed on players' desktops.

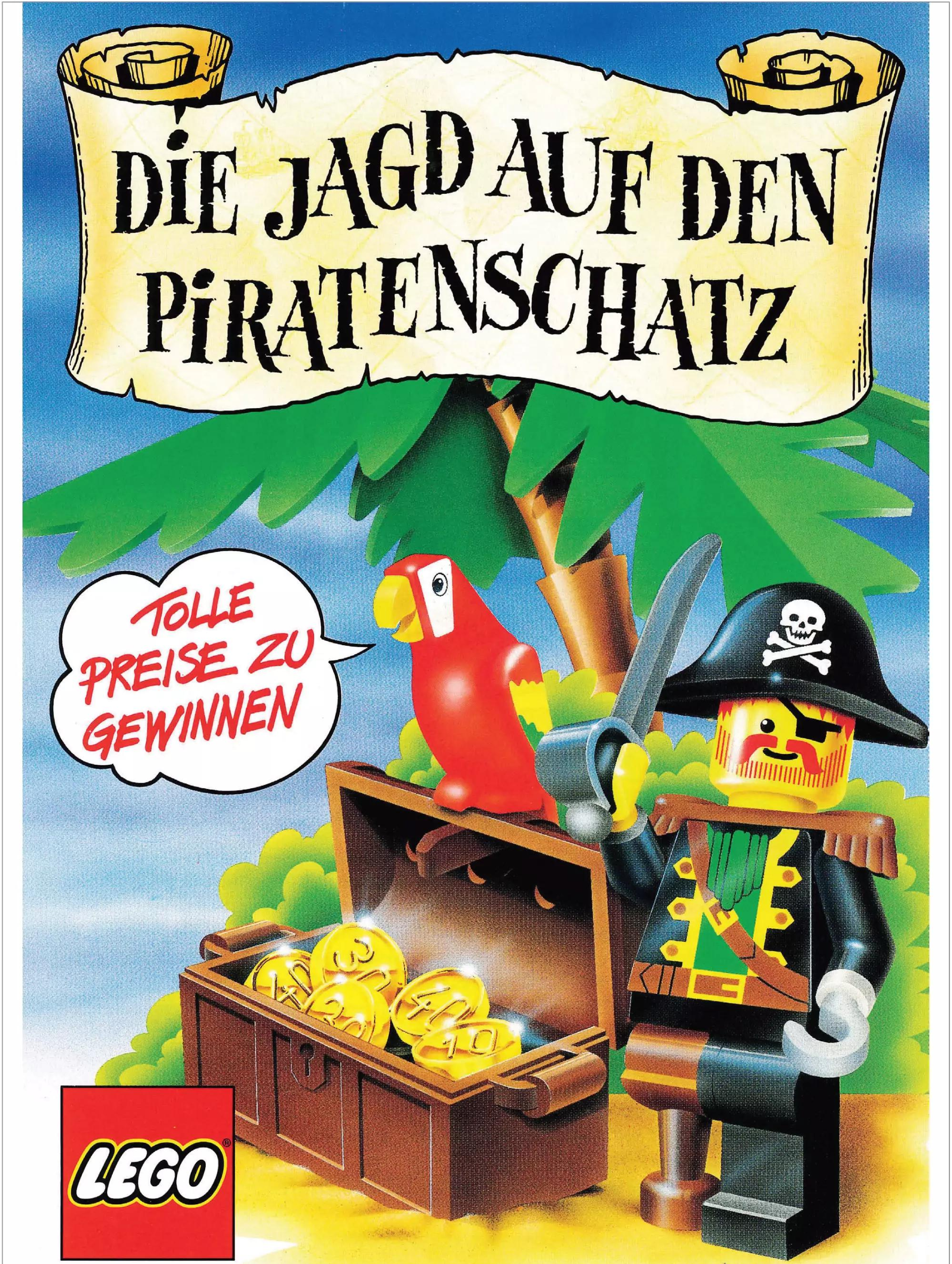
When they realised that wasn't much of a game, they transformed it into a LEGO train that would shunt around desktop screens. Eventually they gave up on the desktop aspect and turned it into a fully-fledged game that opens in its own window. It's hard to argue with the fundamentals, after all.

The finished game tasked players with constructing railway lines, crossings, stations, buildings and roads, including houses that LEGO minifigures would eventually populate once the simulation was turned on. There was even a hint towards multiplayer (of a sort), as a mail carriage on the train could transport postcards to other players via tunnels at the edge of the map, though the network setup required for that was probably beyond most children and their parents in 1998.

LEGO Loco wasn't received so favourably – one critic said it "made me want to tie myself to the tracks." Probably one to leave in the archive.

CHRIS TURNER-WHARFE

Captain Redbeard promoted 'the hunt for the pirate treasure' competition in 1989.


DIE JAGD AUF DEN PIRATENSCHATZ
TOLLE PREISE ZU GEWINNEN
LEGO
MICKY MAUS nr 21 maj 1'89

2162 **Theme:** Aquazone / **Year:** 1997 / **Average selling price new:** £208 / **Average selling price used:** £63 / **Recommended age:** 8-12 / **Pieces:** 287 / **Minifigures:** 2

Hydro Reef Wrecker

When the crystals are tougher to find than ever before, it's time to bring in the heaviest machinery there is. Get ready to fire up a mini version of Hydro Reef Wrecker so you can help the Aquaraiders on their mission

Don your flippers and helmet, because it's time to return to Aquazone with this miniature version of the biggest Aquaraiders set from 1997, 2162 Hydro Reef Wrecker. This group followed the original Aquanauts and represented a new faction within the wider story.

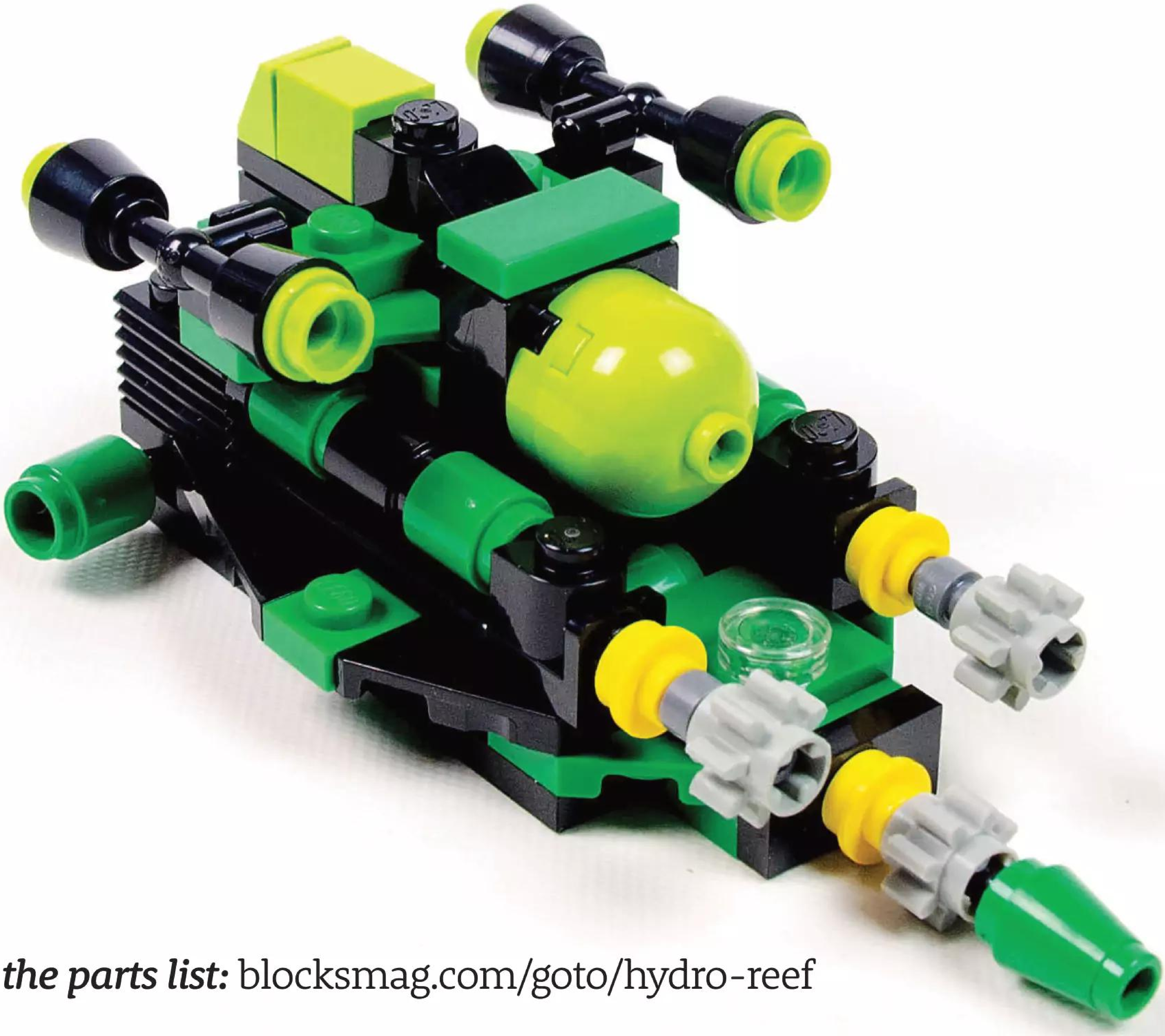
According to the lore, the Aquaraiders used drills to unearth hydrolator crystals, the rare mineral that allowed underwater breathing across the oceanic world. Recreating one of their signature vehicles in miniature form captures the distinct visual identity that made Aquazone such a beloved theme.

Maintaining the striking colour combination of green, black, and transparent neon green along with subtle accents of yellow is essential for authenticity. The design challenge is to represent the drills and canopy in a way that stays faithful to the original while working at a much smaller size.

The drills are recreated using the smallest available Technic gears, preserving the look of the original which used the same approach that the designers took on the original set. Parts in the original transparent neon green are not available in the required shapes, so lime green substitutes for it to maintain the visual look of the model. The end result is a small build that still carries the technological flavor and colour vibrancy that defined the 1997 design and also recreates the mini sub detaching from the back of the main vessel.

Aquaraiders was the smallest of the Aquazone factions, consisting of only three sets, which makes it a perfect candidate for a complete miniature lineup. Building 2161 Aqua Dozer and 2160 Crystal Scavenger at this scale would round out the collection and bring the full story of the subtheme back to life.

DANIEL KONSTANSKI



Get the parts list: blocksmag.com/goto/hydro-reef

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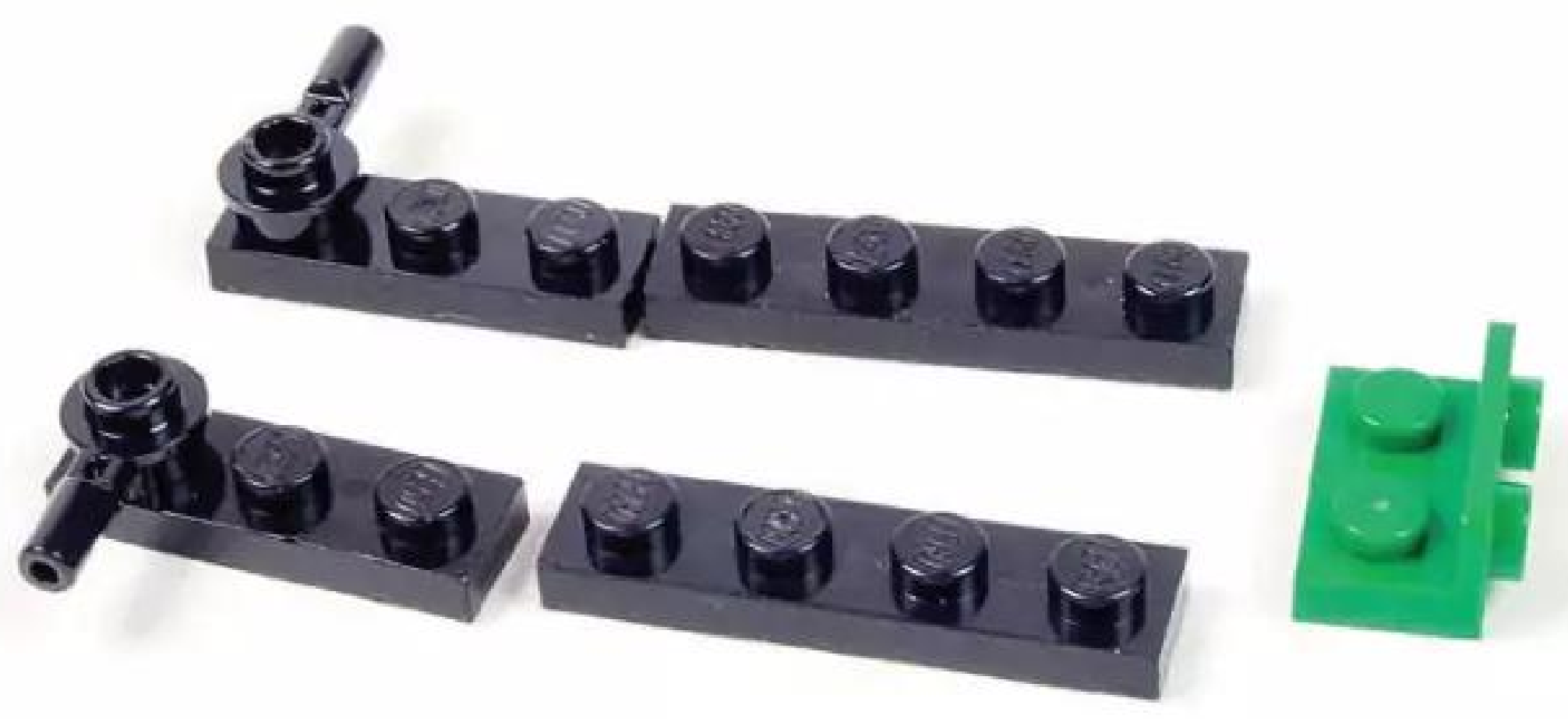

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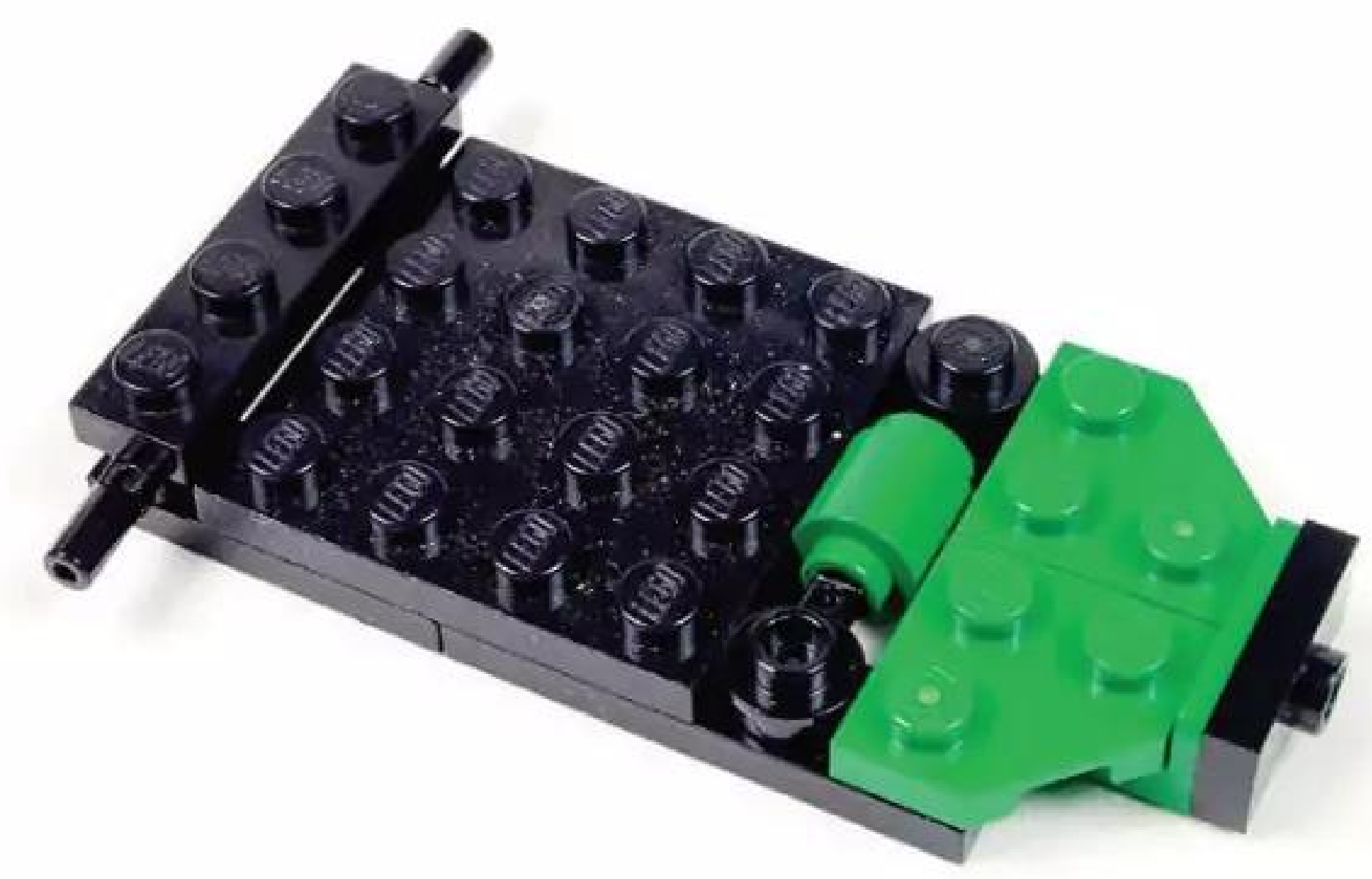

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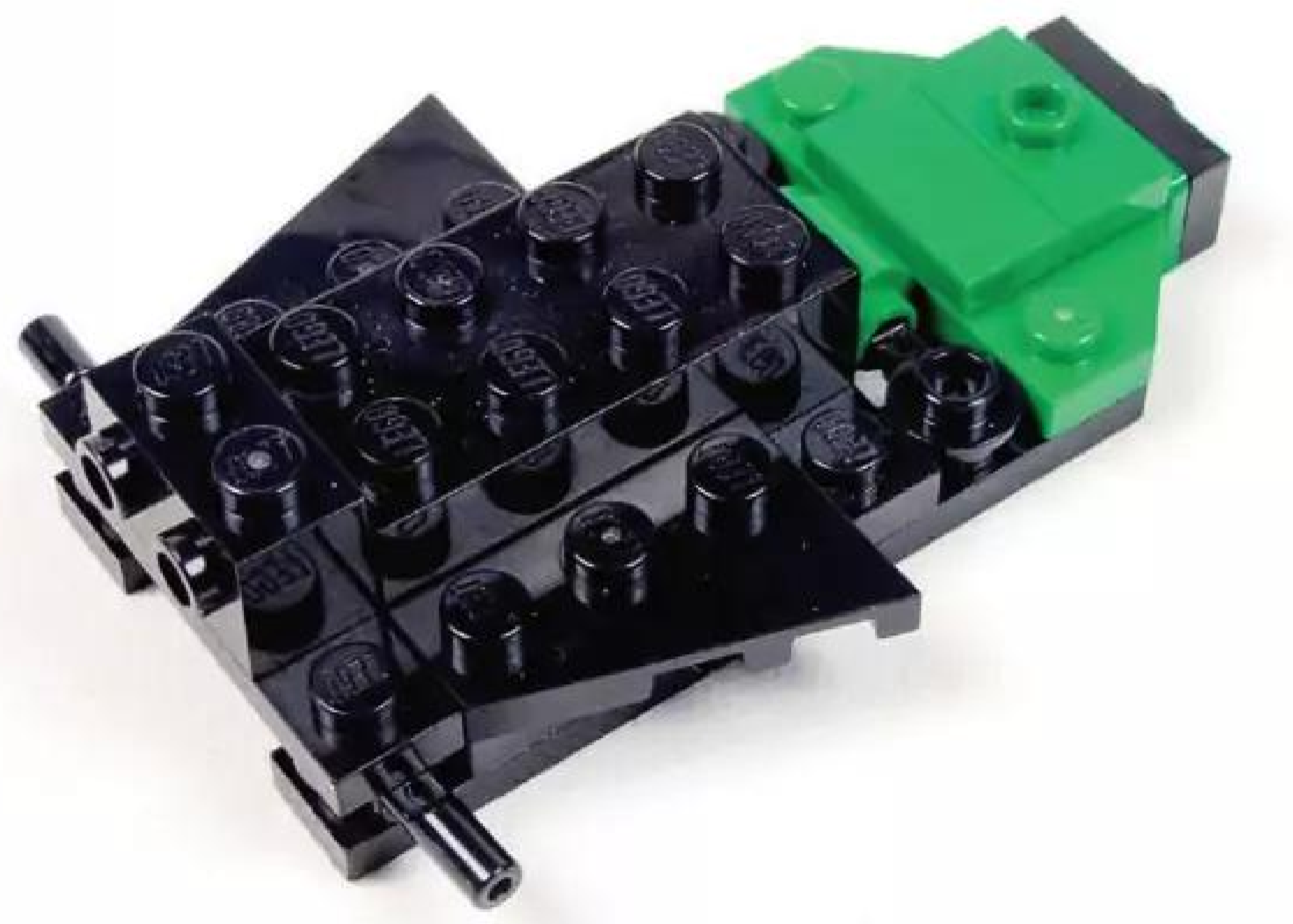

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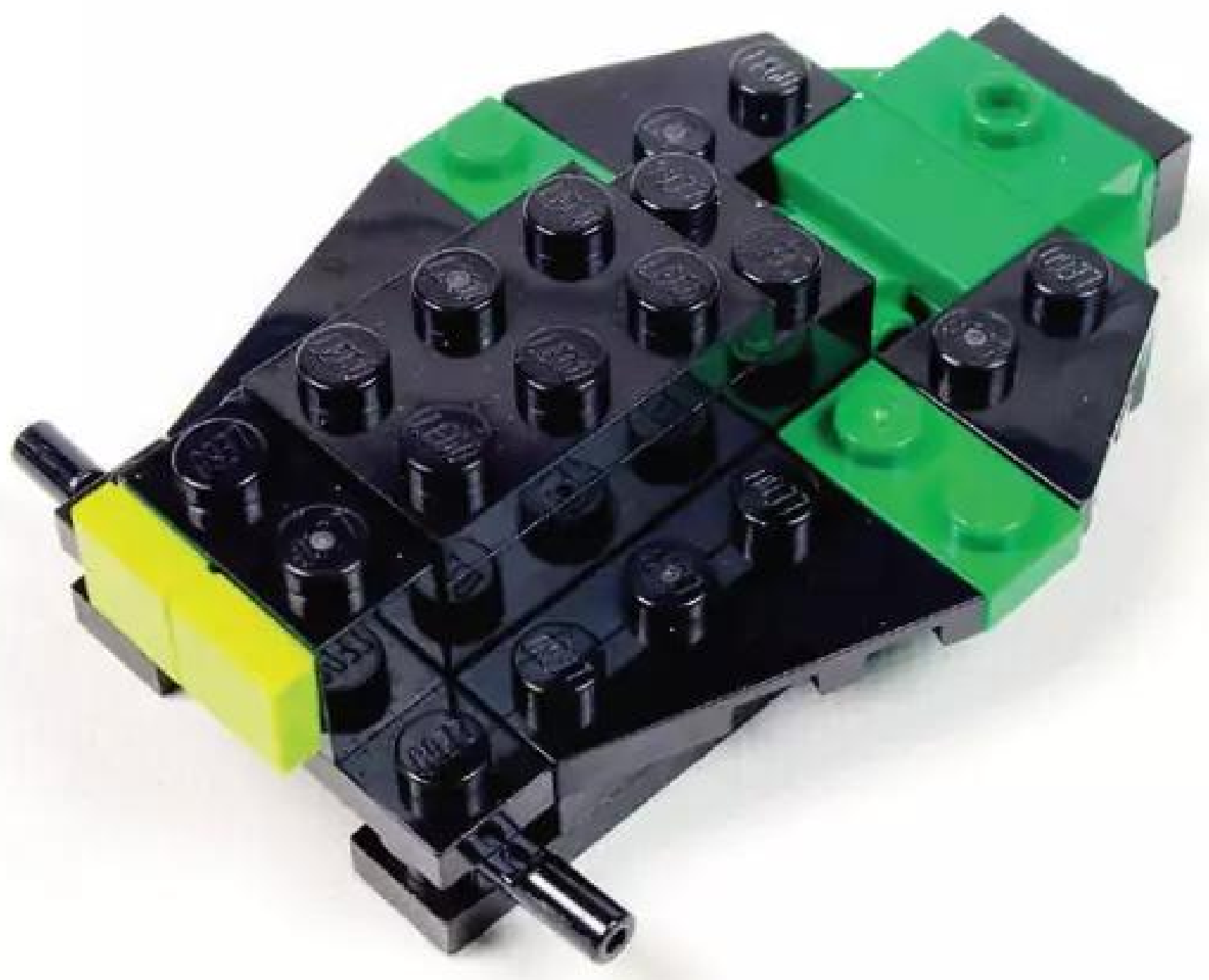

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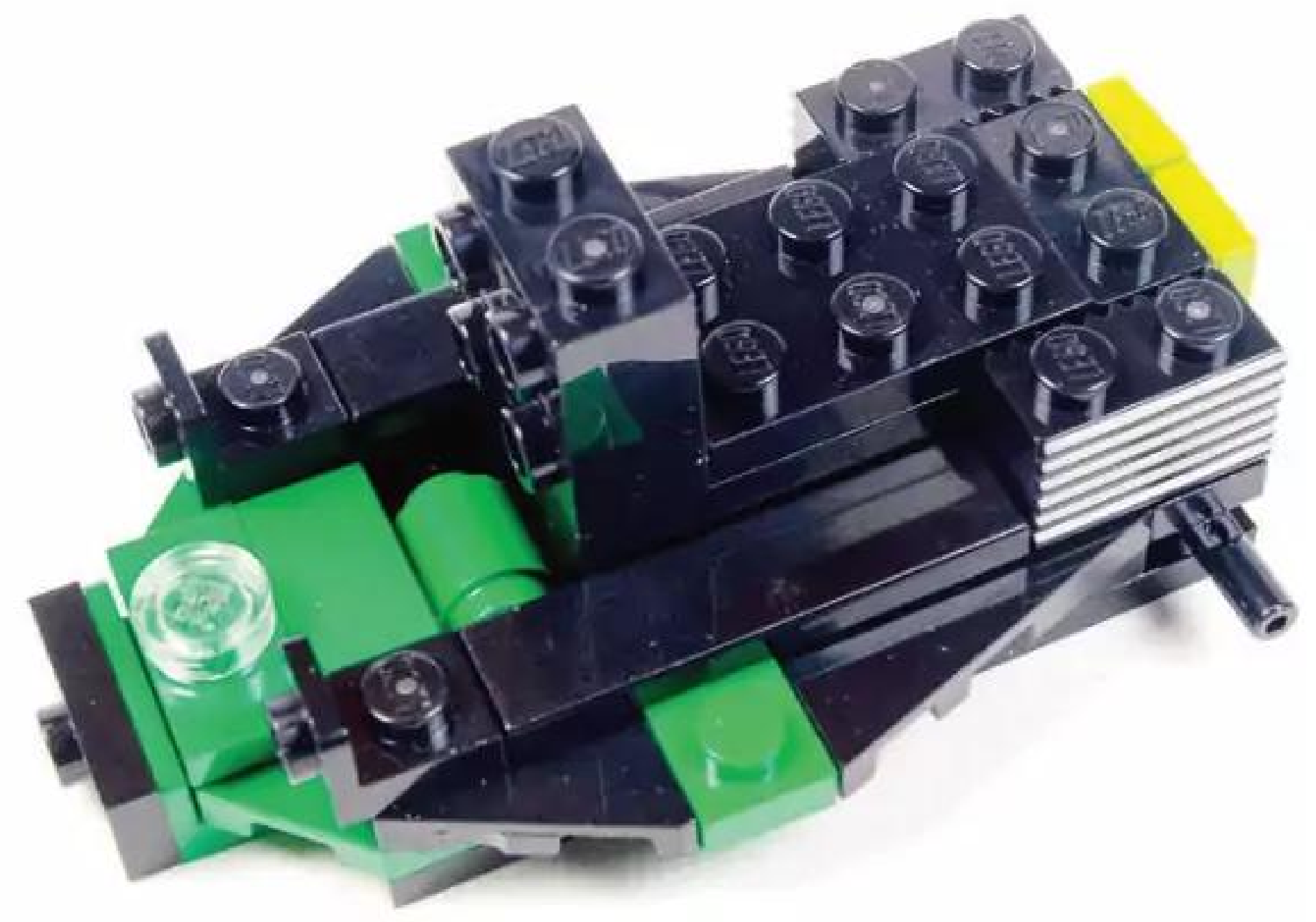

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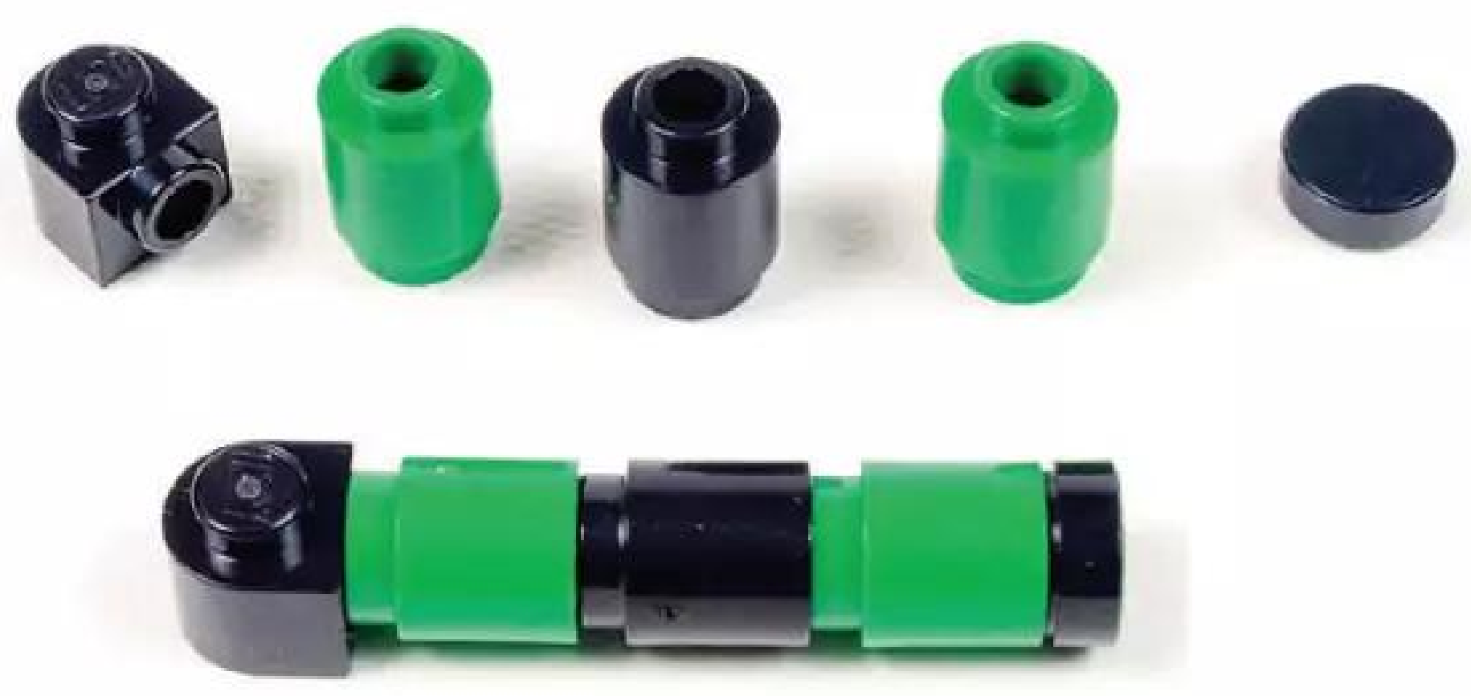

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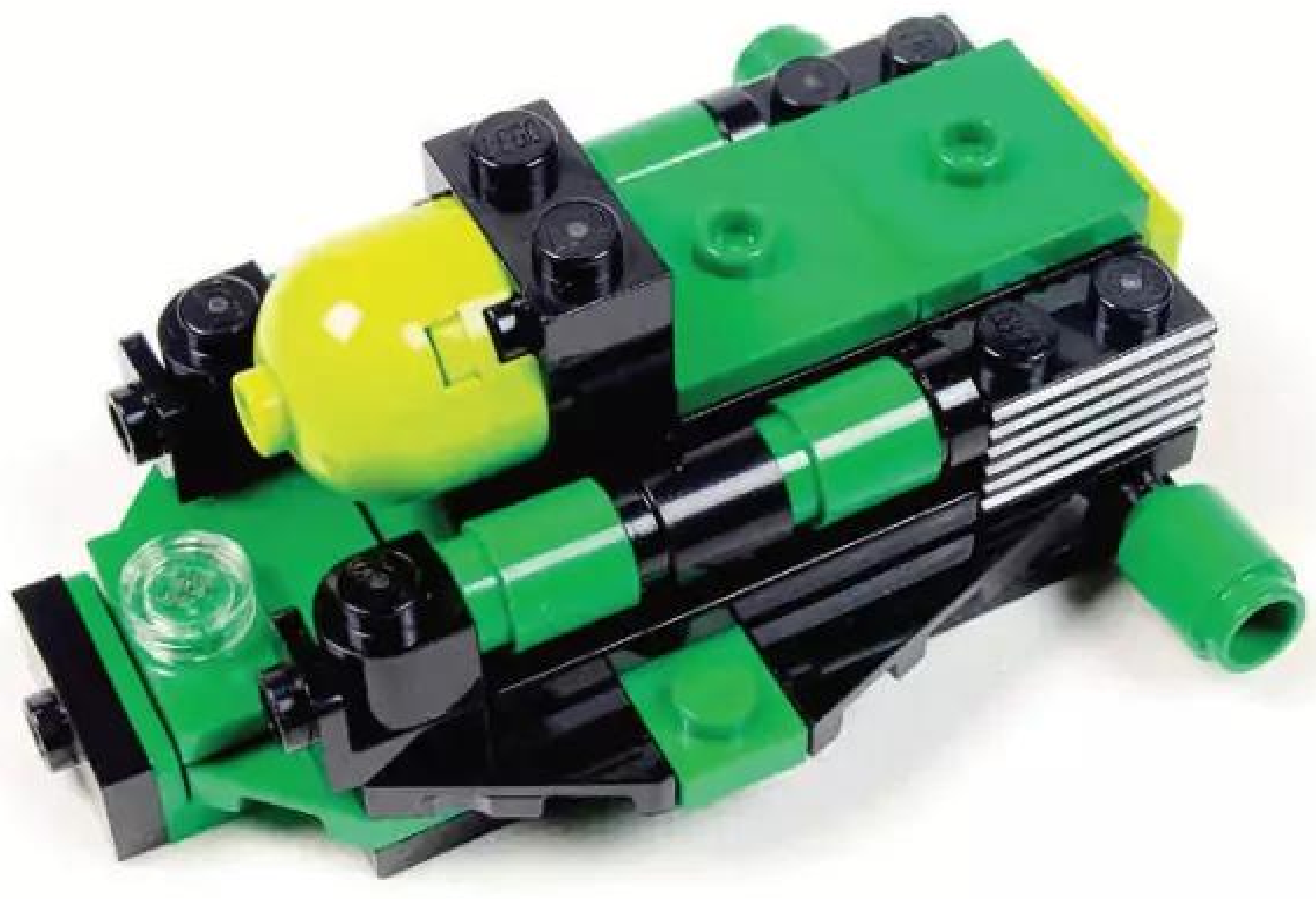

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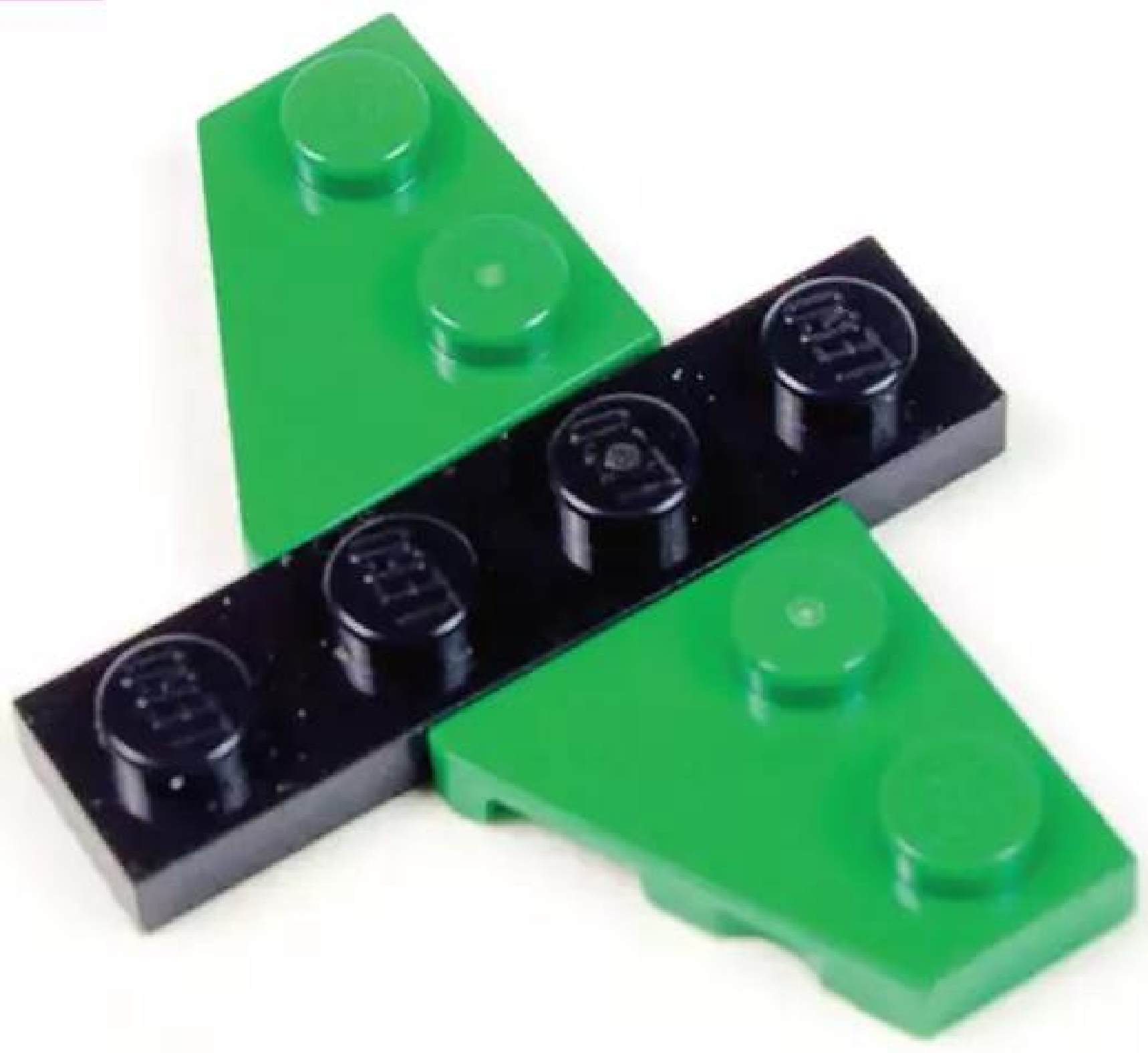

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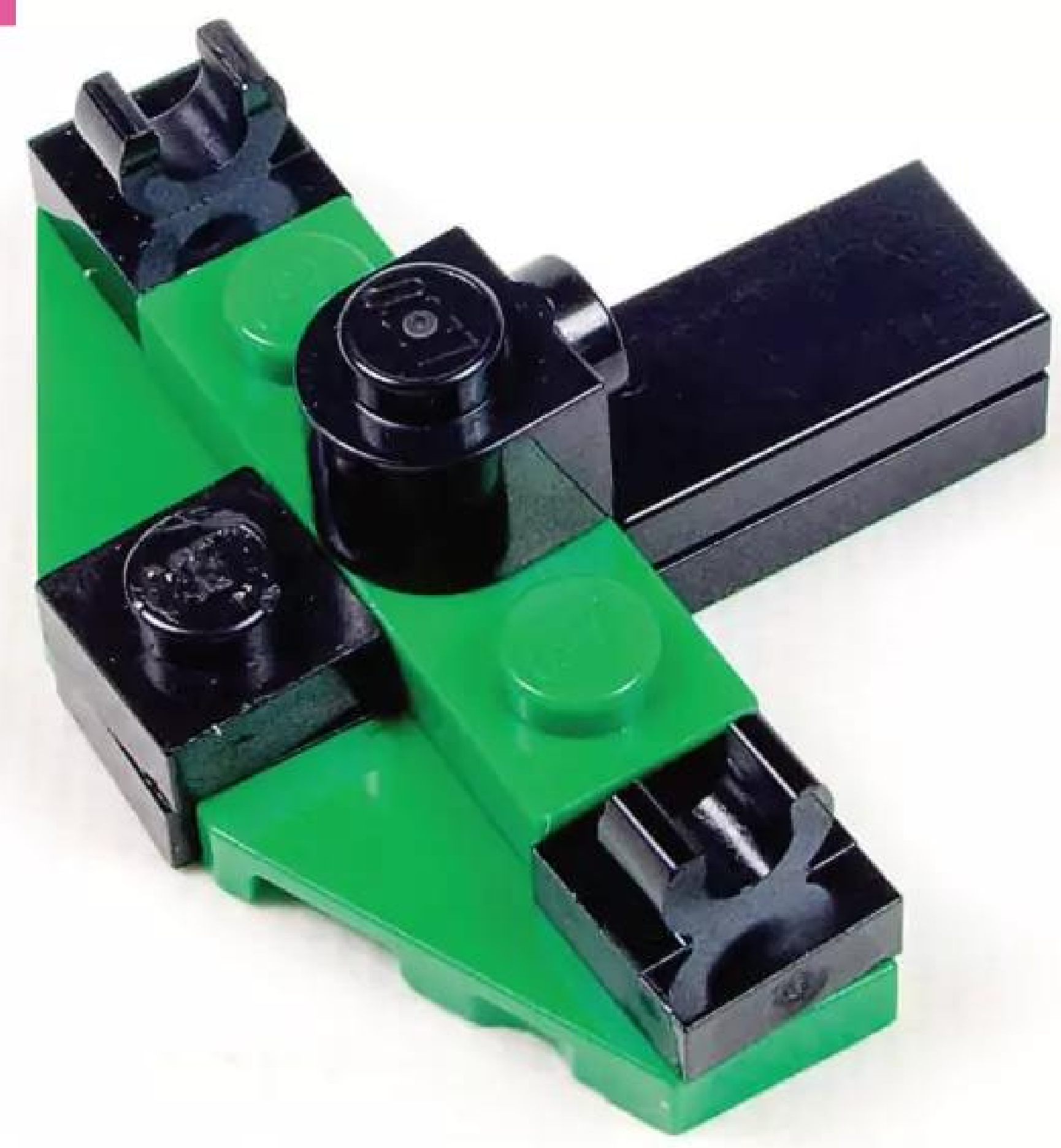

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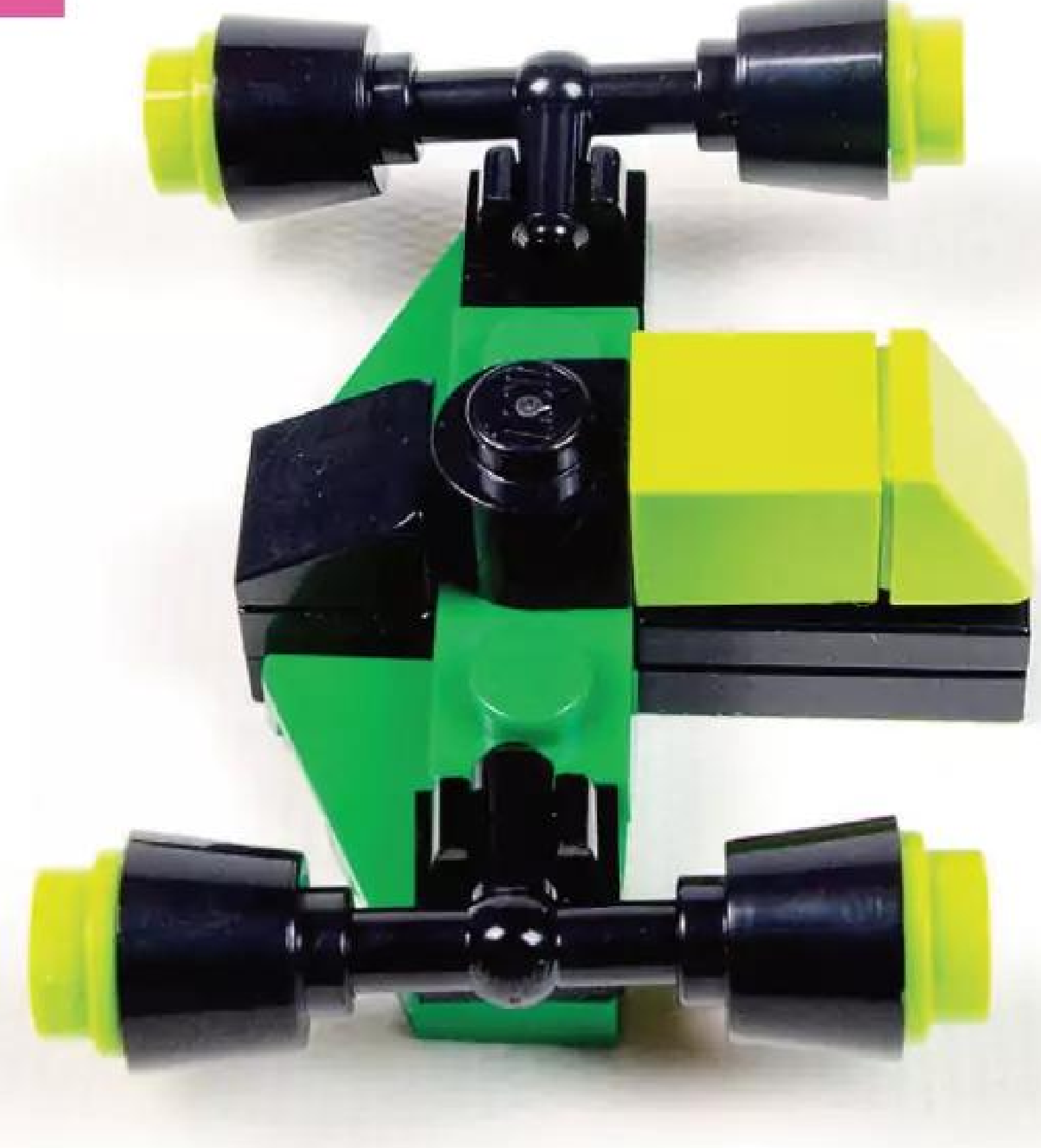

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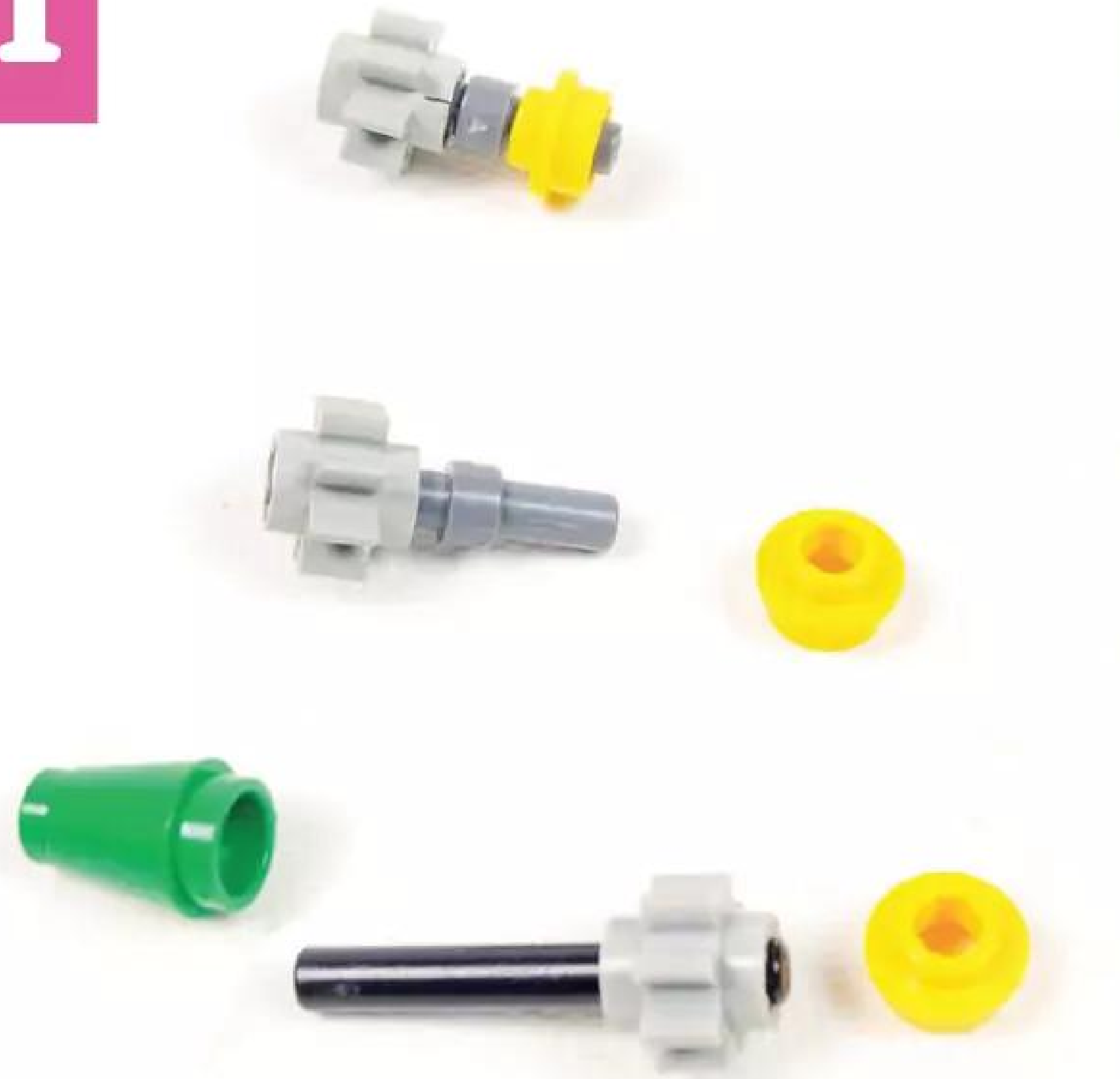

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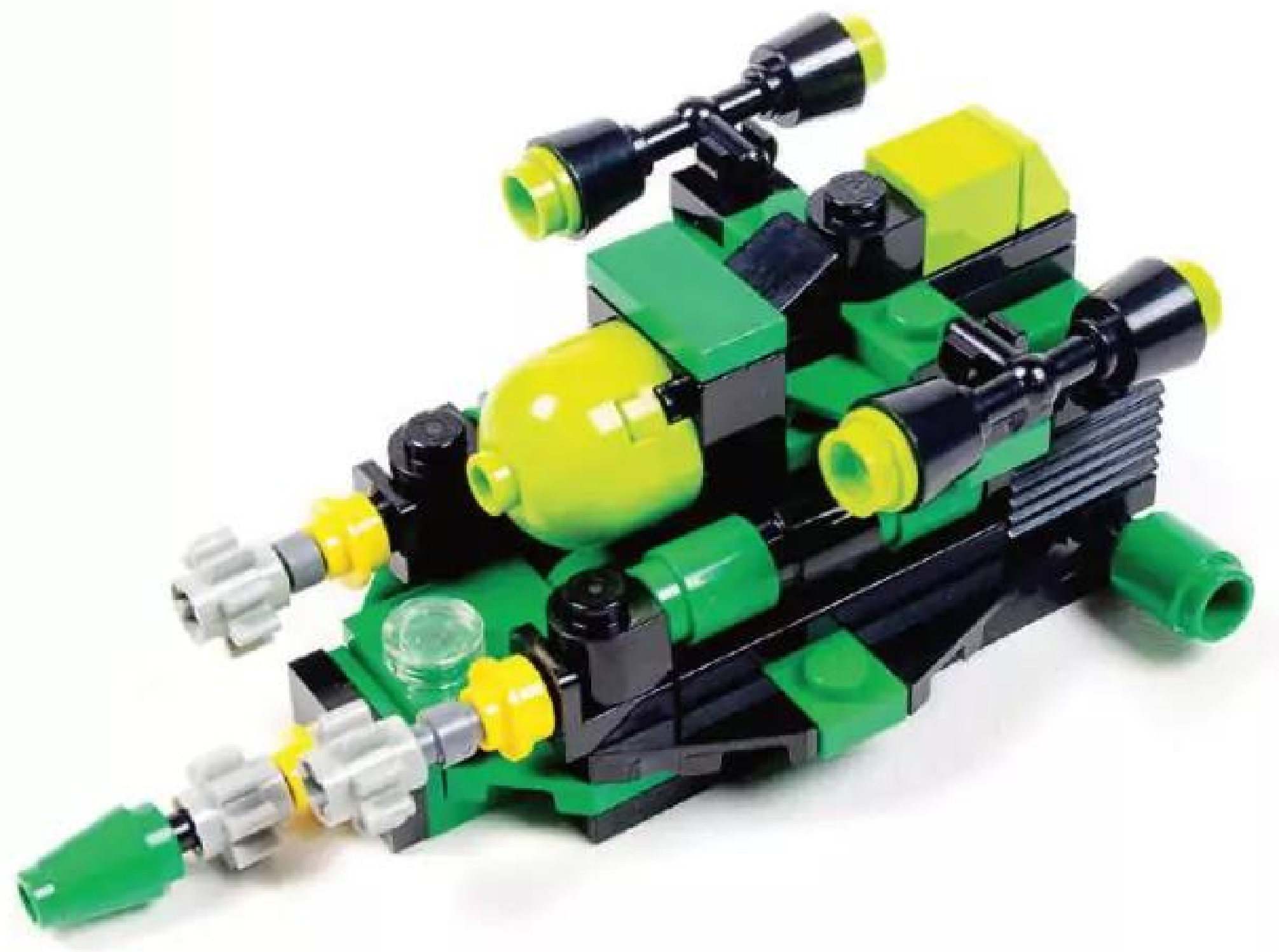
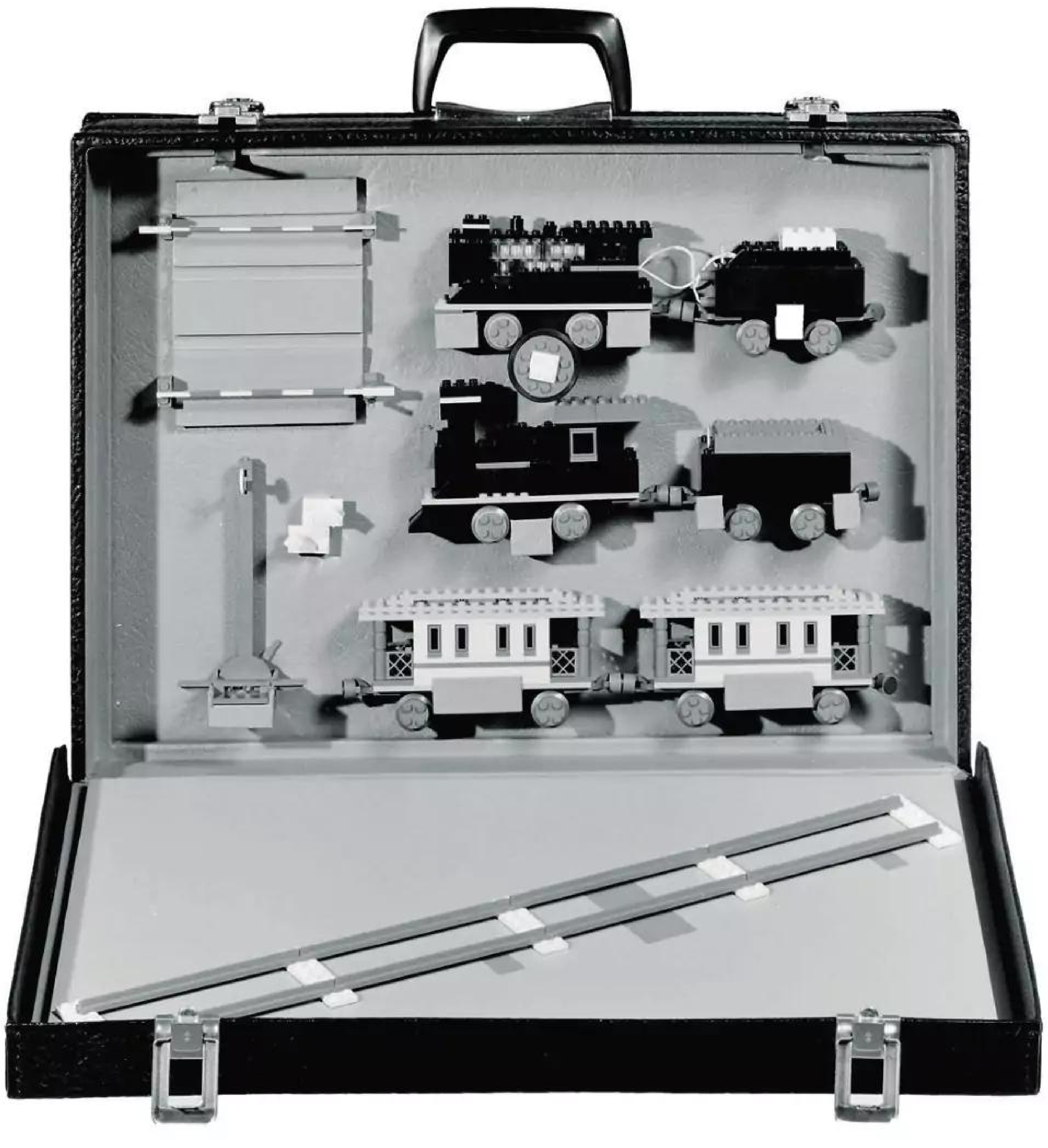


From the Vault

SALES CASES

In the earliest years of the LEGO System, salespeople went around selling products from custom made briefcases



Today LEGO bricks need no introduction. They are iconic all over the world. However, in the earliest years this was far from the case. Not only was the brand relatively unknown outside of Denmark, but the whole concept of buildable brick-based play was still new.

Department stores were still in their infancy and were only in big cities. The more rural shops, which were the LEGO Group's bread and butter in those early years, were almost exclusively family run affairs in which sceptical shop owners had to be convinced to dedicate their limited shelf space to new products. Persuading these often-reticent gatekeepers fell to a small group of traveling salespeople who spread out from Billund armed with custom briefcases.

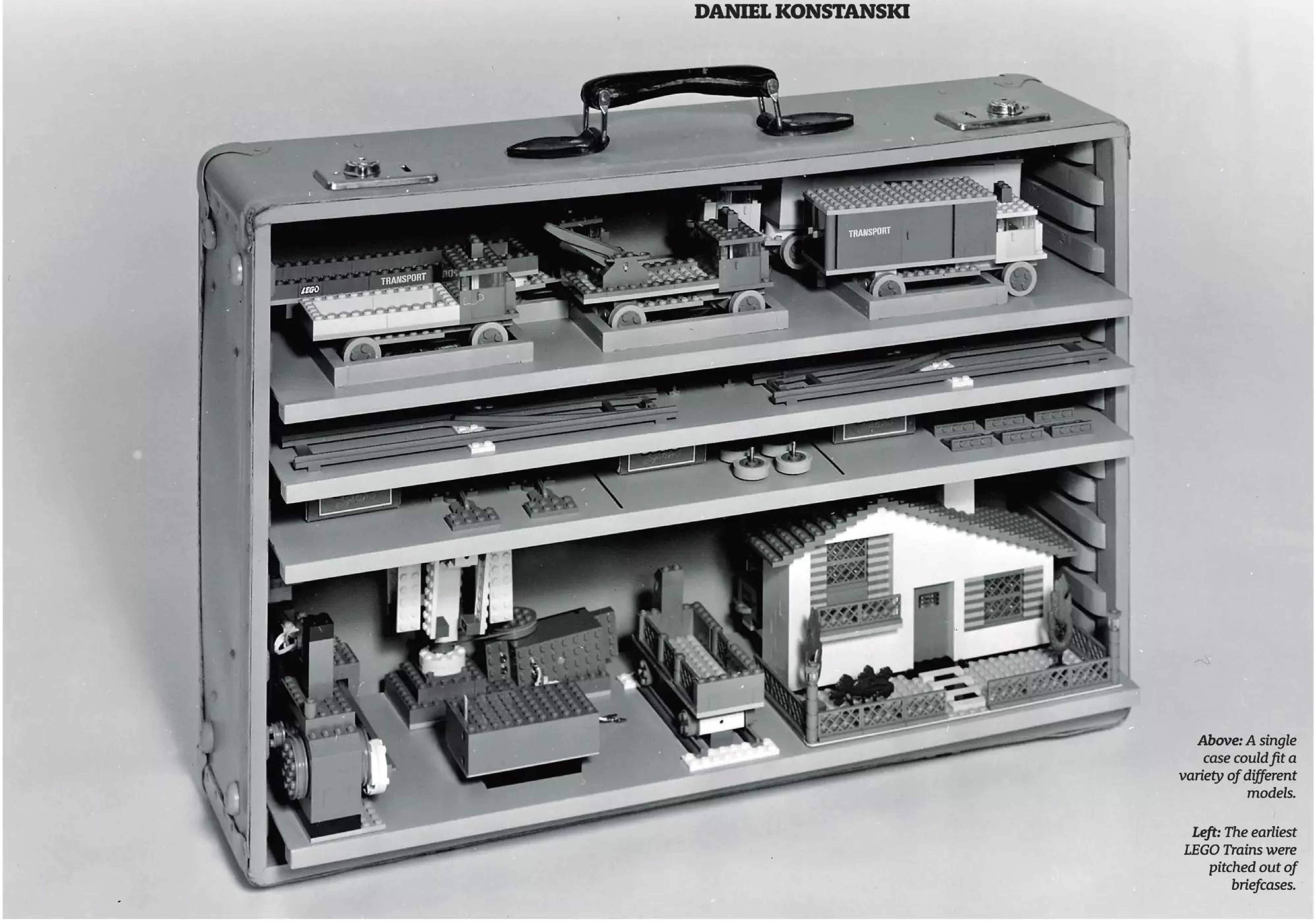
These briefcases had to do a lot of heavy lifting. Shopkeepers were known to be suspicious of salespeople and would often only begrudgingly give them a few moments of their time. In those brief moments, the salespeople needed to impress the store owner enough to place an order to take back to Billund. The salespeople were paid on commission.

Their cases were standard briefcases that could be purchased from stores, with modified interiors to meet the needs of the salespeople. It is highly likely that some of these interiors were constructed by the craftsmen who worked for the company. There were plenty of them around, as wooden toy production was still going strong at this time.

Different styles were employed. Some had the models attached to the back of the case, while others included rows of removable plates on which models were set so that they could be quickly removed and placed on a table fully constructed.

As the LEGO System in Play took off during the 1960s, the LEGO brand became much more well known, it didn't tale as much convincing to get shopkeepers on board. As their reputation for quality products and solid sales grew, the LEGO Group shifted its sales tactics to those of a much larger company and these briefcases full of models were no longer needed. Today they hark back to a different time and are a classic piece of the company's history.

DANIEL KONSTANSKI



Above: *A single case could fit a variety of different models.*

Left: *The earliest LEGO Trains were pitched out of briefcases.*

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